

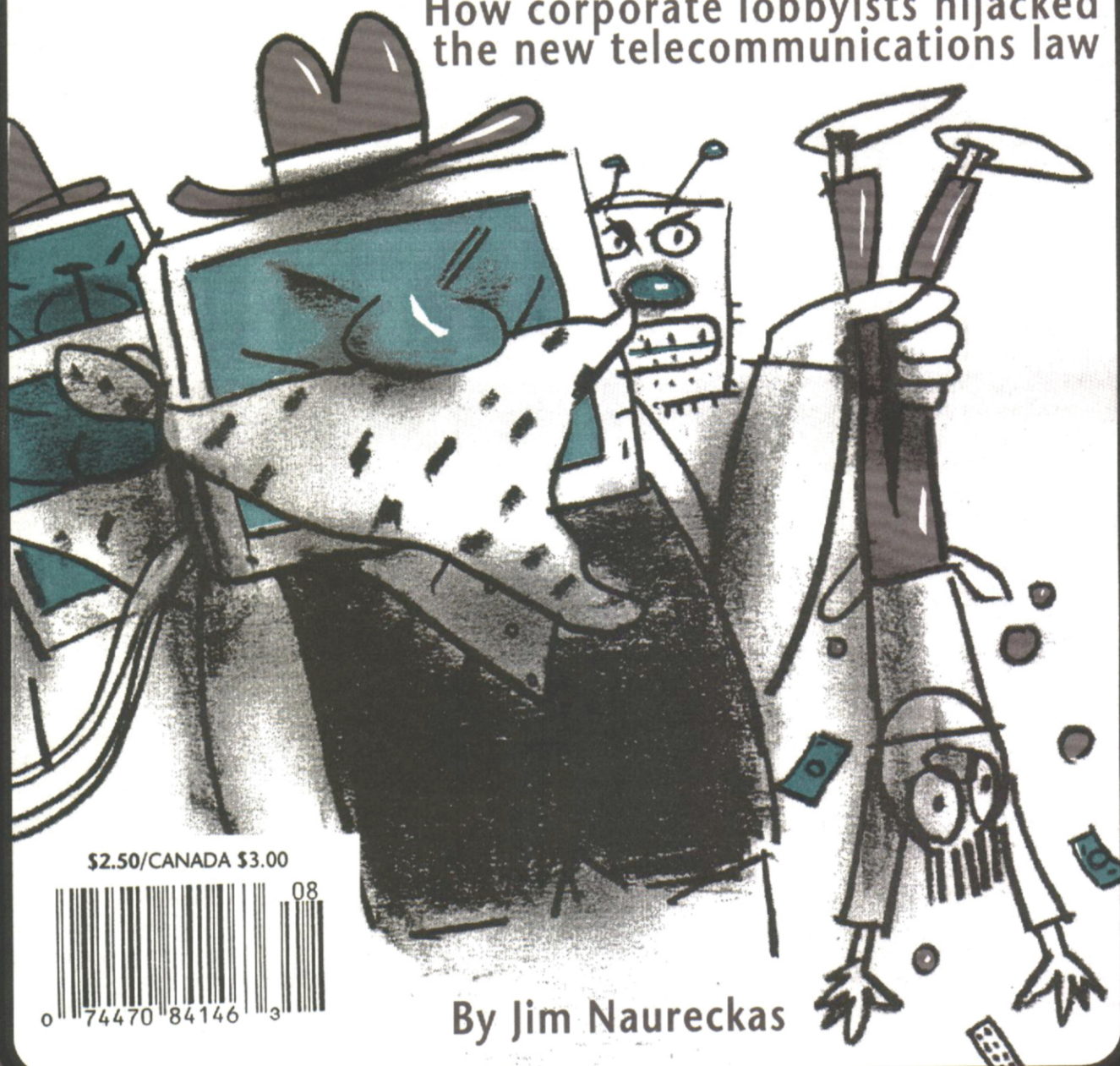
GREAT CESAR'S GHOST: THE UFW BOUNCES BACK

March 4-17, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

INFO-BANDITS

How corporate lobbyists hijacked
the new telecommunications law



\$2.50/CANADA \$3.00



By Jim Naureckas

EDITORIAL

BAD BOY BUCHANAN'S GIFT TO AMERICA

Ever since the Democratic Leadership Council arranged the marriage between Bill Clinton and big corporate money four years ago, we on the left have been asking why we need two Republican parties. Recently, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Stephen Chapman, one of America's more ideological right-wingers, reversed the question and asked why we need two Democratic parties.

Writing just two days before the New Hampshire primary, Chapman lamented that "the heirs of Abraham Lincoln [were] fighting over the mantle of Samuel Gompers." The worst was Pat Buchanan, "posing as a defender of the beleaguered working class." But after Iowa, Bob Dole also fell in line. Discovering a "disgusting paradox," Dole said what only a few weeks earlier would have been unthinkable for a Republican: "Corporate profits are setting records, and so are corporate layoffs." This led Chapman to worry that any day now we "can expect to see Lamar Alexander wearing a tool belt and leading choruses of 'I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night.'" With all this going on, he asks, "Why not just elect a Democrat?"

Chapman's question reminded us that 20 years ago, just after Jimmy Carter's election, we wrote that there were two very different parties in the United States. We were, of course, not talking about the Democrats and the Republicans. There hasn't been much difference between them since the Cold War began. What we meant was that every four years, an electoral party comes to life in order to gain the support of the American people, and that after the election it is replaced by the governing party.

Our remarks back then concerned Carter's cabinet appointments. The new president, we wrote in the December 20, 1976 issue, was "no exception to the rule of talking 'populism' to the voters" during the election season, and then, when in office, "performing as the executive of the corporate order."

MOBERG GOES GLOBAL

We are proud to announce that Senior Editor David Moberg has received a grant from the Charles D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to do research for the next year on changes in the global labor market. Unfortunately, David will be taking a one-year leave from In These Times, but he will be writing for us from time to time on developments in the trade union movement.

Sixteen years later, we could have written the same thing about Bill Clinton. He got elected by talking about fair trade, as opposed to free trade, a substantial increase in the minimum wage, universal health coverage and federal job training and child care. Once in office, however, most of that was forgotten and his administration did more for corporate America than any in recent memory.

And now we are again seeing the electoral party take shape as the seven Republican dwarfs and Pat Buchanan take their show from Iowa to New Hampshire and beyond. The governing party has become all but invisible. Consider, for example, the dramatic disappearance of Newt Gingrich's deficit-obsessed agenda—an agenda that the Clinton White House has for the most part also adopted. Before the primary season began, both sides gave priority to balancing the budget and cutting back on social spending. And the Republicans insisted on giving a big tax cut to the wealthiest Americans.

Now, at least rhetorically, it's a brand new ballgame, as the *Tribune*, bedrock of mainstream Republicanism, marveled just before New Hampshire's primary vote. Acknowledging that the Republican presidential candidates have "finally figured it out," the *Tribune* explained that economic anxiety is what's vitally important. So, they wrote, now we see these traditional friends of the business community "attacking corporate downsizing, stagnant wages and the cruelty of profits that come at the expense of employees."

For this, of course, we have Pat Buchanan to thank. While this year's crop of non-starters were squandering tens of millions of dollars bad-mouthing each other on TV, and as they blathered on about the political trivia tracked by their pollsters, Buchanan ignored the federal budget deficit and moved beyond his base of social conservatives to address the underlying reality of most people's lives. With much less money than his rivals, and with no official party support, he ignored the polls and focus groups and talked about the deep insecurity that plagues tens of millions of working Americans who play by the rules but keep losing.

And his success in doing so jolted the anointed leader of the pack to follow suit, though a bit too late—and a bit too transparently—to stave off defeat in New Hampshire. Dole, of course, only weakly echoed Buchanan's attack on corporate greed. Republicans, after all, are the official party of business. And the official bipartisan myth, repeated by

President Clinton in his State of the Union address, is that this country is doing just fine because corporate profits are up, the stock market is booming and millions of new jobs are being created. It's worse than bad manners to acknowledge the underlying reality—that 80 percent of working Americans have seen their real weekly earn-

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IN THESE TIMES
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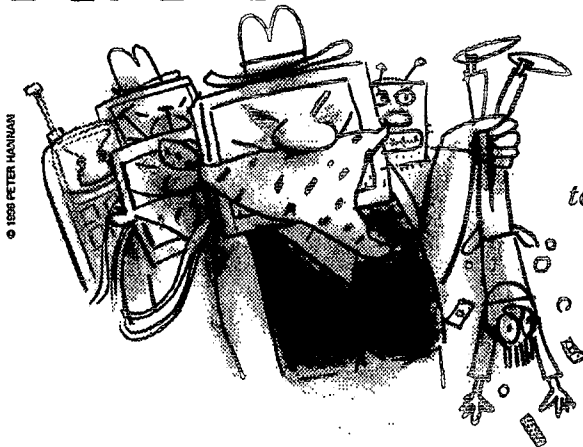


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LETTERS

Left out

Staughton Lynd's letter to the editor (February 5) should be required reading for anyone wanting to understand why the American left has failed over the last half-century. Rather than celebrating the fact that progressives are uniting around a revitalized labor movement, Lynd chooses to launch a vituperative personal attack on the new AFL-CIO president, John Sweeney.

Those of us in (and out of) organized labor who supported the campaign of John Sweeney, Richard Trumka and Linda Chavez-Thompson did not do so because of some naive notions of hero-worship. Rather, it was the platform they ran on—and are now putting into effect—that is a source of encouragement. That platform calls for: a substantial increase, to 30 percent of the AFL-CIO budget, for organizing the unorganized; a reinvigoration of grass-roots political education and support activities; and a commitment to rebuild the labor movement itself from the ground up.

Perhaps alone among the entire

progressive coalition, organized labor has gone through a searching, self-critical examination and has emerged with dynamic new leadership and an action-oriented agenda. Lynd, however, is content to continue the time-worn tradition of factionalism and divisiveness that has doomed the American left to irrelevancy. I hope his is a lonely voice.

David P. Koppelman
Los Angeles

Microsofthead

In his February 5 letter to the editor, Matt Loschen of Microsoft took exception to an article ("Appall-o-Meter," January 8) charging that company chairman Bill Gates does not contribute to charity. Loschen noted that Microsoft matches his contributions to various charities "dollar for dollar"—therefore, Bill is not a "Scrooge." I was amused by Loschen's missive. Really, who gives an expletive whether or not capitalism's premier nerd donates a pittance to the poor?

What proved more interesting, however, was Loschen's attack on another

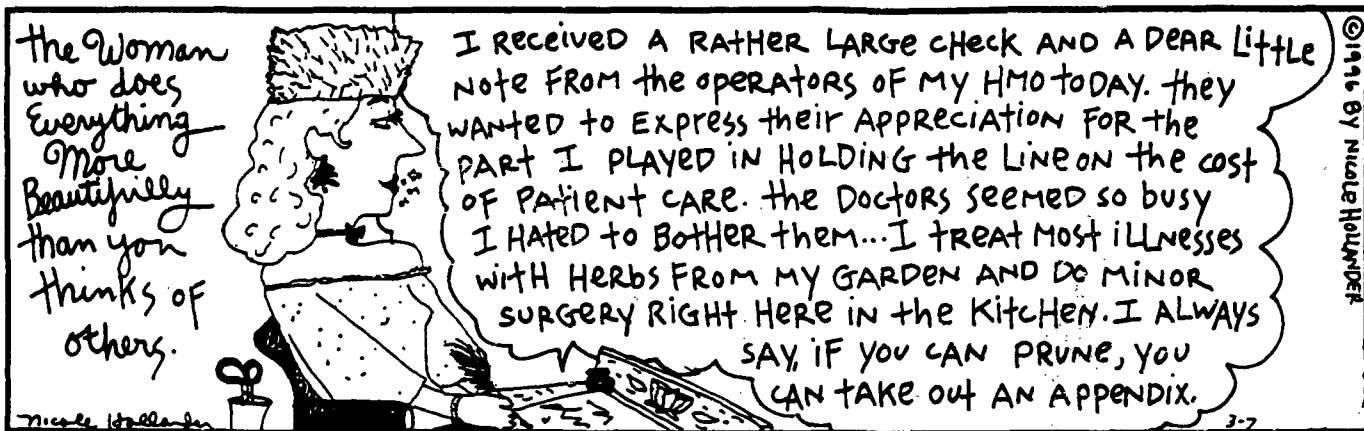
article ("Shareware," January 8) that spoke approvingly of Linux, a non-commercial computer operating system developed by Finnish graduate student Linus Torvalds and thousands of collaborators around the world. With a distinctly *ad hominem* tone, Loschen accuses ITT of misleading readers by suggesting that Linux, an operating system "written by grad students in their free time," is a viable alternative to software written by "thousands of pros ... working [their] butts off."

In fact, Linux is vastly superior to the software written by legions of pros with sore buttocks. Some of the "grad students" who write Linux code include Richard Stallman of the Free Software Foundation (I believe he graduated from school some time ago), an off-center legend who distributes his code in accordance with a "Copy-Left" agreement. The fact that Stallman, Torvalds and others distribute their code for free—and encourage user modifications of their code—no doubt displeases Gates, his fans and his employees. Gates would never let end users hack his source code (this means access to trade secrets), and of course, nothing Microsoft produces is free.

Does Linux represent a viable alternative to Microsoft's much-hyped Windows 95? Windows 95, to my mind, is an overpriced, inefficient and resource-hungry operating system. What's worse is that all the sloppy programming resulted in Win95 barely

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



being released before 1996. Was the wait worth it? Well, the industry joke is that Win95 is Mac87. (And be advised that Win96 is now in beta testing—break out the wallet, since upgrades are a breadwinner for corporate software firms.)

By contrast, Linux is a very efficient operating system. It comes with more text editors than I can recall, and most of them are preferable to Microsoft Word, which has so many unusable bells and whistles that it is a virtual dog. Linux also bundles games (including the very popular Doom), spread sheets, a windowed environment with a great text editor (emacs) that supports fancy fonts (“ghostscript”) and multiple applications that facilitate Internet access without third-party assistance or billing. (This must annoy Gates and his new ally, MCI.) In addition, Linux technical support is available for free from hackers around the world at support@infomagic.com. Microsoft charges a hefty fee for its support services.

Finally, the key point here is not whether Chairman Bill gives a virtual nod in the direction of progressive charities. The issue is: America’s premier nerd sells a shoddy product and charges an arm and a leg for it. That, methinks, is what prompted Loschen’s hasty attack on *In These Times*.

Thomas Good
Systems Administrator,
St. Vincent’s North Richmond
Community Mental Health Center
Staten Island, N.Y.

Early fall?

It is rather ironic to hear Matt Loschen from Microsoft (“Letters,” February 5) claiming that large concentrations of capital and expertise are needed to develop software, since Microsoft itself started as a small company in the 1970s, and grew because the major industry players (IBM, etc.) failed to take advantage of the potential of the microcomputer. Today collaborative efforts done on the Internet, such as Linux, are rapidly emerging.

And the development of Linux is much more than a quixotic “grad school” stunt, as Loschen suggests. Literally thousands of people have contributed to Linux, including (in addition to grad students) plenty of professionals, some of whom are paid to write Linux code by major computer companies. If companies like Microsoft choose to ignore this way of doing business, they may find themselves irrelevant much sooner than anyone expected.

Jim Kingdom
@harvey.cyclic.com

Rewrite to life

Jennifer Gonnerman was right on in her column (“Media Watch,” January 8) about the anti-choice movement’s manipulative creation of the term “partial birth” abortion. They are master propagandists and have clearly won the semantic battle of the abortion wars.

Their earliest and greatest victory was the co-opting of the term “pro-life” to describe their cause. In fact, of course, their cause is anti-life, since they would deny pregnant women the right to choose an alternative—abortion—that entails less risk of death than giving birth. *That* right to life was the basis for a decision by the California Supreme Court (*People vs. Belous*) establishing a constitutional right to abortion. The *Belous* decision predated the *Roe vs. Wade* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that, unfortunately, was based on the right to privacy.

The fact that a woman’s right to an abortion is based on a right to live as well as a right to choose, and that the name “pro-life” is a lie, should be constantly emphasized by pro-choice advocates.

James H. Kovacs
Philo, Calif.

Huzzahs

Congratulations and huzzahs to Joel Bleifuss for his article “The Grand Inquisitors” (*ITT*, February 5). He has

done a wonderful job in blasting the media for smearing Hillary Rodham Clinton with unsubstantiated allegations, half-truths and outright lies. If those same journalists with visions of Woodward and Bernstein dancing in their heads would dig more deeply into the facts, their visions could become reality.

Go back to the allegations that Bill Clinton had an affair with Gennifer Flowers. They first appeared in a scandal sheet and were picked up immediately by the national press. How long did it take to find that (1) she was paid \$125,000 by the rag and \$50,000 by “concerned Republicans” in Little Rock; (2) she had denied the same allegations two years before under oath; (3) she claimed their first tryst had taken place at a hotel that was not built until two years after the alleged rendezvous?

Robert G. Cox
Van Nuys, Calif.

Death watchdog

Please cancel my subscription to *In These Times*. I find your flippant treatment of those who disagree with the “Lone Nut” theory of the JFK assassination to be spurious and dishonest.

I was deeply disappointed by your glib dismissal of speculation that Dallas paramedics may have contributed to Lee Harvey Oswald’s death (“Appall-O-Meter,” February 5). In fact, there is some concern about the care Oswald received immediately after Jack Ruby shot him. Whether one believes the bungled care to have been deliberate (I do not) or merely an innocent error, in retrospect, the nature of Oswald’s injuries suggest that the immediate application of CPR techniques was not indicated, and may have been harmful. Your disdainful treatment of this matter speaks volumes.

David H. Stern, M.D.
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Editor’s Note: Please keep letters under 250 words in length or we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say.

IN SHORT

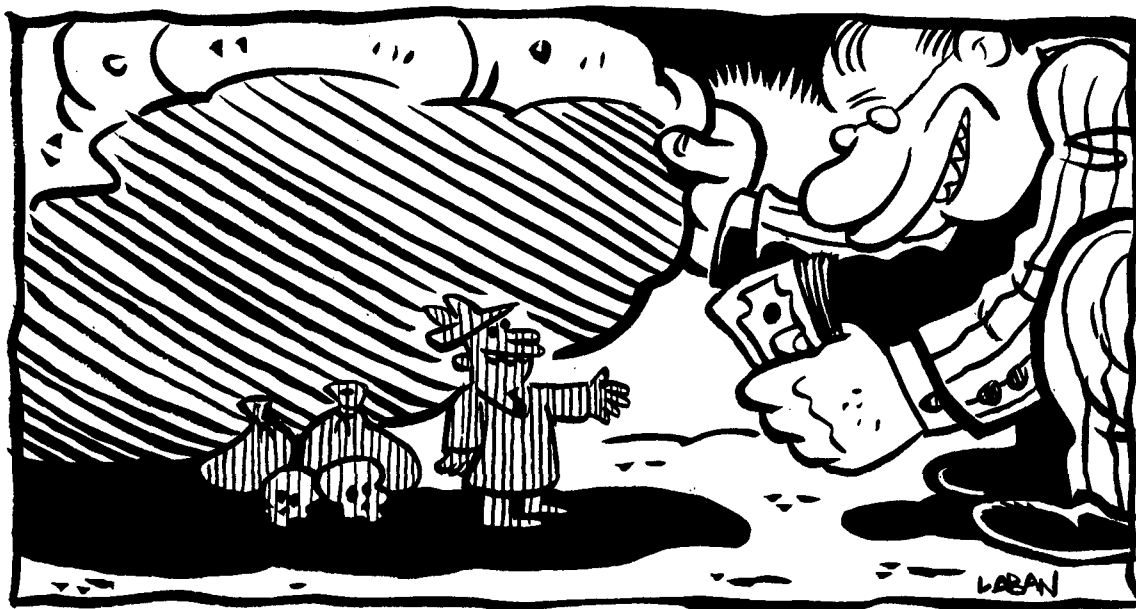
cy-makers re-examine current laws that "can prohibit pre-emptive attacks on terrorists or support for individuals hoping to bring about a regime change in a hostile country." These measures were enacted in 1976, after a Senate investigation uncovered widespread abuses and questionable activities, including numerous assassination plots on the part of the CIA.

Although the "independent" CFR panel's report acknowledges the CIA's "record of operating with questionable legality and judgment," it nonetheless praises the agency as "an important national security tool" and urges that it engage in more spying and covert actions abroad. The panel, funded in part by the right-wing John M. Olin Foundation and headed by Richard N.

Haass, a former senior member of the Bush National Security Council, also called on the CIA's overseers in the legislative and executive branches to recognize that clandestine activities "will at times prove necessary to associate the United States with unsavory individuals, including some who have committed crimes. ... This is acceptable, so long as the likely benefits for policy outweigh the moral and political costs of the association."

"That's the old line," counters Ralph McGehee, who spent 25 years working in the CIA Directorate of Operations, which runs most clandestine activities. The ex-operative, who now maintains CIABase, a database that tracks CIA operations, says that when it comes to covert actions, the agency has had a "horrendous record."

John Pike, who heads the Federa-



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CIA SPIN CONTROL

It's been a bad couple of years for the Central Intelligence Agency. On top of Aldrich Ames' devastating confession that he spied for the Soviets, the agency has been pilloried for its links to political murder in Guatemala and Honduras as well as economic espionage in France. And last fall CIA Director John Deutch told a Senate oversight committee that agency officials had knowingly passed along misinformation about Soviet arms capacity—supplied by KGB agents, no less—to three presidents and Congress.

In response to this string of embarrassments, and in order to map out the CIA's role in a post-Cold War world, both the Clinton administration and Congress have established panels to examine the mission and methods of

the U.S. intelligence community. The executive branch's congressionally mandated Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the United States Intelligence Community, commonly known as the Aspin-Brown Commission, is set to issue its report in early March.

But if the recommendations of a Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) task force are any indication, the national security establishment isn't countenancing any major changes. The CFR report, issued in late February, actually recommends that the CIA be allowed to engage in *greater* "risk-taking." It calls for a relaxation of current restrictions on clandestine activities, such as the prohibition on using American journalists and clergy as spies. The CFR also recommends that poli-

APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



David Futrelle

Prison blues 8.4

Perhaps as many as 100 inmates in Philadelphia jails, including some who were actually acquitted in court, were held long past their intended release date—up to several months—due to a little processing snafu straight out of Kafka. Apparently the inmates were simply forgotten, the *Philadelphia Daily News* reports: Their paperwork was never processed by the clerk of quarter sessions and sent on to prison authorities. “What can I say? It’s government,” explained Frank Conaway, 2nd deputy clerk in the quarter sessions office.

Shot in the dark 9.2

If you’re the kind of person who thinks that a shot in the back is worth two in the air, you might want to think about moving to Texas. As a recent report in the *Houston Chronicle* indicates, Texas law allows property owners to use deadly force against thieves—even if

they are fleeing the scene of a crime and pose no threat to the shooter—so long as the shooting is done at night. Citing this law, a Dallas grand jury recently refused to indict a Texas man, despite evidence he had deliberately executed two teenagers in a parked car one night for stealing wheel ornaments from his own vehicle. According to Paul Blackman, a research analyst for the National Rifle Association, the original justification for killing thieves at night can be



found in an ancient source. “It’s in the Bible, in Exodus,” he told the *Chronicle*. “I believe it’s chapter 22.” See also St. Paul’s Epistle to the Michigan Militia.

The Dark Brown Curtain 4.4

Aspекter is haunting the mail room. “Overnight delivery service made the world a better place for Capitalism,” reads a full-page newspaper ad for UPS’ new distance-based shipping rates. “So why are the rates still based on Communism?” We at *In These Times* are keenly interested in the answer, as our supply of rubles is perilously close to running out.

Anatomically 5.3 incorrect

After examining what looked to be an aborted fetus discovered by the side of a Connecticut road, frozen and covered with grime, Assistant Medical Examiner Henry Minot declared the fetus officially dead. Well, close. As the Associated Press reports, the “dead fetus” was in fact a medical training doll, apparently too realistic for its own good. But the state’s chief medical examiner, Dr. Wayne Carver, isn’t terribly troubled by Minot’s mistake. “I’d much rather he did this than call it a mannequin and be wrong,” he explained to the press.

of what the Directorate of Operations does for a living.” The overwhelming majority of CIA-sponsored clandestine activities, he argues, are aimed at establishing “agents of influence in [U.S.] client states.”

With ex-intelligence officers, their former military and civilian bosses and congressional patrons dominating the membership—as well as the witness lists—of these review panels, failure to produce significant reform seems to be a foregone conclusion, says Steve Aftergood, co-director of the FAS secrecy project.

McGehee has offered the Aspin-Brown Commission access to his extensive database. Not surprisingly, however, his overture has fallen on deaf ears. Historically, McGehee says, such review panels have been “nothing more than a mechanism for calming the waters.” For the tempest-tossed intelligence community, smooth sailing seems to lie ahead.

—Peter Zirnite

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM

With all the attention these days on the new breed of media giants—authorized by last month’s telecommunications deregulation to trounce consumers—it’s easy to forget those other broadcasting battles still being pitched. Think back a year or so, and you may recall another debate that involved congressional overhauls and overshadowed citizens: the one over public broadcasting.

In their fervor to balance the federal budget last year, Republicans put public broadcasting at the head of their hit list. Reciting the usual damnations—that public TV and radio are bastions of liberalism, relics of the failed Great Society—the new Congress considered public broadcasting’s \$285 million appropriation an important symbol: If we eliminate it, they seemed to say, we’ll show we mean business.

Sen. Larry Pressler (R-SD), who

tion of American Scientists’ (FAS) Project on Government Secrecy, argues that intelligence agencies should stress the analysis of information over its collection. “We’re collecting too much and not assessing enough,” Pike says, noting, for example, that the CIA had satellite photos of mass graves in Bosnia in hand well before forces on the ground “discovered” them. “We need to be buying \$10,000 computers to assess this stuff, rather than spend-

ing billions of dollars on satellites to take more pictures that nobody is looking at.”

Pike also dismisses the CFR’s designation of Iraq, Iran and North Korea as priority targets for future intelligence operations as nothing more than an attempt to justify continued high levels of spending. Focusing on hostile regimes may help to engender public support for covert action, he says, but it is a “fundamental misrepresentation

authored much of the new telecom legislation, went after public broadcasting with a vengeance. Hoping to root out liberal bias, Pressler directed Henry Cauthen, then chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), to compile a list of all NPR staff who'd worked at the leftist Pacifica Radio and a list of all political contributions made by CPB employees or fundees. Not since the days of Richard Nixon had public broadcasting faced such an all-out attack.

After running scared in the face of the congressional onslaught, public broadcasting regrouped, and met the Republican assault head-on with a litany of polling data, audience research and grass-roots organization, all of which indicated that the American public valued public broadcasting and wanted it left alone. In the face of this outcry, the Republicans' only choice was to compromise. HR 1944, signed into law by President Clinton in late July, granted a reprieve: This year, the CPB budget stands at \$275 million; in 1997, it will get \$260 million. While these appropriations represent, on average, 15 percent cuts from prior levels, they're still an improvement over



Corporate lube job

CONSUMER ADVOCATES MAY HAVE FAILED TO BLOCK THE GOVERNMENT'S January approval of Olestra, the calorie-free chemical oil that acts as a fat substitute. But now they're pressing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to require that warning labels be placed on all Olestra products. The Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington, D.C., wants the FDA to ensure that consumers are fully aware of the Procter & Gamble product's rather alarming side-effects—which include abdominal cramping, loose stools and increased flatulence. In calling for the warning label, the center's executive director, Michael Jacobson, also noted that Olestra "attaches to valuable nutrients in the bloodstream and flushes them out of the body. Some of these nutrients—called carotenoids—appear to protect us from such diseases as lung cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease and macular degeneration." Jacobson predicted that Olestra will one day take its place next to another Procter & Gamble product—Rely tampons, inducers of toxic shock syndrome. —Joel Bleifuss

what the agency initially expected from the new, antagonistic Congress.

But the CPB and its PBS and NPR fellows aren't in the clear yet—there's still the matter of funding beyond 1997. Last September, both the House and Senate held hearings on the future of public broadcasting, with both chambers sounding baleful notes.

Looking to cut the CPB off the federal payroll by 2002, most survival plans—including those offered by

the CPB, PBS, NPR and other public broadcasting entities—look to entrepreneurial, commercial means of long-term support, such as increasing product tie-ins, improving viewership, and even creating retail outlets such as the Learningsmith stores of Boston's WGBH, which hawks PBS wares. With every such scheme, public broadcasting strays that much farther from its mandate to serve the public rather than the product.

And with the public diverted by media mergers and telecom revolutions, the sworn enemies are keeping close to the fight. Not a week after Clinton had signed HR 1944, Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) tried to tack an amendment onto an appropriations bill that would have eliminated CPB funding for 1998—effectively killing the CPB before any funding alternative could be found. Hoekstra's amendment was soundly defeated, but the meaning wasn't lost: Republican monomaniacs are nowhere near done with public broadcasting yet. —Thomas Goetz

Is there a doctor in the house?

HOW ABOUT A BOOKKEEPER? PAPER PUSHERS NOW MAKE UP 27.1 PERCENT OF ALL U.S. health care workers, up from 18.1 percent in 1968. Today, doctors and nurses—who composed 52 percent of the industry's workforce in 1968—account for just 44 percent. Those are the troublesome findings of a new study by Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein, professors at Harvard Medical School and co-founders of Physicians for a National Health Program. Writing in the February *Journal of Public Health*, the two argue that the surfeit of private administrators is the key reason that health care employment in the United States is 7 percent higher per capita than in Canada, which has a single-payer health care system. While Canada employs more nurses per capita than the United States, it spends one-third less per person on health care. "The U.S. could vastly reduce medical costs and actually increase medical care by switching to a Canadian single-payer system," says Quentin Young, the national coordinator of Physicians for a National Health Program. "The resources saved by trimming paperwork would be sufficient to cover the 40 million uninsured Americans and improve care for many Americans with insurance as well." —J.B.



Whiteout

While it comes as no surprise to hear that white men dominate the ranks of TV news correspondents, many media watchers were taken aback when they heard that the percentage of women and minority correspondents is dropping. A new study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington reveals that a smaller percentage of evening news stories were reported by female or minority reporters in 1995 than in previous years.

Surveying the 13,617 evening news stories broadcast last year on ABC, NBC and CBS, researchers found that minority reporters filed 12 percent of the segments—down from 14 percent in 1994. Similarly, women reported 21 percent of news stories in 1995, down from 25 percent the previous year. One of the key culprits in this shift was *CBS Evening News*. Women reported just 21 percent of the show's news stories last year—down from 29 percent in 1994 and 34 percent in 1993.

Hard Times

The *New York Times* has finally launched a counterattack against Angela Dodson, the African-American editor who last fall slapped the *Times* with a lawsuit charging discrimination. (See Media Watch, January 22.) Earlier this month, the *Times* submitted its official response to Dodson's allegations. Dodson's complaint, according to the *Times*' response, "is devoid of factual and legal merit, and filed for the sole purpose of trying to embarrass the *Times* into settlement." Already, Dodson's

suit has been a source of embarrassment for many of the paper's top managers—including Executive Editor Joseph Lelyveld and former Executive Editor Max Frankel—who are among the named defendants.

The *Times* has unveiled a two-pronged strategy to fight Dodson. In its official response, the *Times* attempts not only to poke holes in Dodson's argument, but also to claim that her complaint is invalid because she filed it more than a year after most of the discrimination allegedly occurred—thus exceeding New York's statute of limitations for discrimination complaints.

Hired in 1983, Dodson zoomed up the *Times* hierarchy—rising in less than a decade from copy editor to head of the 42-member style department to senior editor in charge of recruiting reporters. Even though she was promoted faster and higher than many of her colleagues, Dodson

claims her authority was repeatedly undermined. She says that her superiors left her out of crucial meetings. And she charges that they frequently criticized her in front of her subordinates though they chastised her colleagues in private.

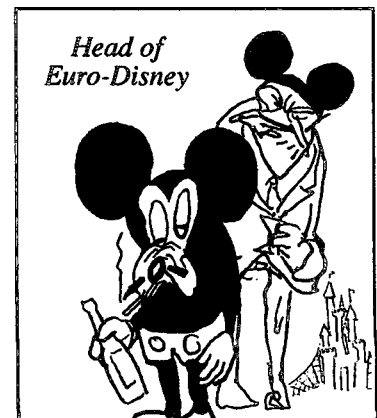
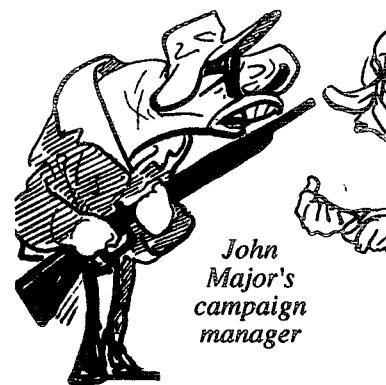
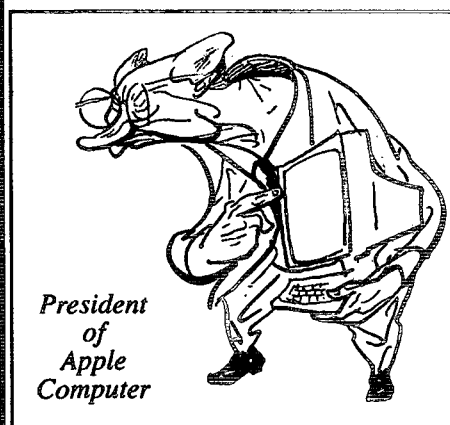
The *Times* contends, however, that in her complaint "Ms. Dodson fails to state that similarly situated whites, men, or non-disabled persons were treated differently. The nature of her complaint is only that (1) she was treated poorly, (2) she is in ... protected categories, and (3) therefore, the poor treatment was based on her protected-category status."

Dodson's attorney, Joseph Maya, describes the *Times* countercharges as "bogus." And he dismisses the paper's claim that Dodson's 1995 complaint was filed too late. According to Maya, the discrimination cited continued until Dodson's firing in late 1995—well within the one-year limit.

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner

New Career Options for Phil Gramm



TAKING THE HEAT OFF TEEN MOMS

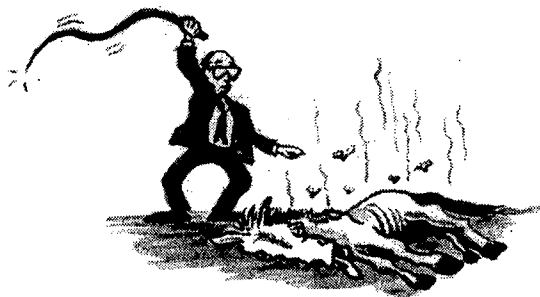
Everybody loves a teenage mother. Whether firebrand conservative or bleeding-heart liberal, if you've got a typewriter and a pose to strike quickly, she's your gal. Charles Murray frets about the onslaught of the underclass, swollen-bellied with outstretched hands; William Julius Wilson brought the pejorative "female-headed household" into the lexicon. The first version of last year's House budget bill recommended eliminating welfare benefits for mothers under the age of 18; less hard-hearted policy-makers and pundits objected to punishing the infants for the "sins of teen pregnancy." A recent *Newsweek* cover story summed up what everybody knows about teen motherhood: "The Name of the Game is Shame."

A recent study done by University of Chicago Professor Joseph Hotz may force the moralizers to do some rethinking. In the public debate on teen motherhood, the causal relationship between early childbearing and low income is taken to be axiomatic. Teen mothers stay poor because they're "kids having kids"; with the proper self-esteem classes and a couple of condoms, or lectures on abstinence from a stern patriarch, they'd be sure to be living better lives. It's true that teen mothers are, on average, poorer and have lower levels of educational achievement than the general population. But correlation is not causation, as the statisticians say. Do women become poor because they have children as teenagers? Or do they have children as teenagers because they're poor?



Funding priorities

IN JANUARY, SEN. ALFONSE D'AMATO (R-NY) ASKED THE SENATE FOR ANOTHER \$600,000 in funding to continue his Whitewater hearings beyond their original February 29 cutoff. The motion, which was still under consideration as *ITT* went to press, seemed likely to pass on a partisan vote. Nevertheless, Senate Democrats highlighted the growing absurdity of the Whitewater spectacle. On January 30, Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) marked the 259th day of GOP hearings by observing that D'Amato's investigation had just surpassed the 258-day run of the O.J. Simpson trial. "The longer we drag this into the political campaign season, the more we undermine the committee's credibility," said Simon. Other congressional Democrats noted that as of January 23, 1996, the Senate had devoted 50 hours to Whitewater hearings and only one hour to discussion of the GOP's proposed Medicare cuts. —J.B.



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In order to test whether convincing teenage mothers to delay birth will actually improve their educational achievements and income levels, Hotz designed a model that would isolate the variable of pregnancy, showing what would happen to a woman in all other respects similar to a teen moth-

er—except that she had not given birth as a teenager. He analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (a project started in 1979 that interviews groups of teenagers on an annual basis throughout their lifetimes), using as the control group teenagers who become pregnant but miscarry, and then wait to have their first child between ages 20 and 25. These are women who behave the way they would if we had a perfectly designed, perfectly targeted program to stop teen pregnancy, a program that brought the teen birthrate down to zero. But compared to this control group, teenage mothers actually achieve higher levels of economic success: They earn more money and work more hours than they would have had they waited to have children.

Hotz's study found teen mothers to be, predictably, less likely to work long hours during their teenage years, when their children are young. But once they hit their 20s, teenage mothers work roughly 1,000 hours a year—approximately 100 to 200 hours a year more than they would have if they had delayed childbearing, working roughly 1,000 hours a year. Teenage mother-

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hood has a similar effect on earnings. Early childbearing initially depresses the labor market earnings of teenage mothers by about \$2,500 a year. However, by the time these women reach their 20s, they are earning approximately \$5,000 more than they would have if they had delayed their childbearing. According to Hotz teenage mothers earn an average of \$11,000 a year at 25 and \$19,000 at 30—insufficient salaries for raising a family decently, but not exactly scraping change from the gutter, either. The kinds of jobs low-income women frequently hold—as secretaries, nurse's aides, telephone receptionists—value seniority and experience over credentials. Interrupting a service-sector job to take care of young children is more harmful to mother's salaries than taking time off from high school is.

Hotz's study leaves plenty of room for naysayers who want to remind us of the obvious—that teenage motherhood is no bed of roses. While they're likely to obtain a GED in their late teens or 20s, teenage mothers are less likely to ever finish high school than those who wait to have kids. Women who bear children extremely young, under age 15, suffer much more severe setbacks in the labor market.

In a perfect world, reproductive freedom wouldn't mean only the power to protect oneself from unplanned pregnancy, but access to the resources that make it possible for a woman to raise a child at whatever point in her life cycle she deems best. But in the world we live in, not even the first condition fully applies. Teen pregnancy can't be ascribed merely to accidents or bad planning, let alone some cultural pathology haunting us from the days of slavery; given the employment prospects for many poor women, it can be a rational response to a difficult situation. As for the problems of the inner city, there isn't any secret formula that accounts for them all—if we want to do something about falling wages and failing schools, we need to talk about the economy and the educational system, and leave the teen mothers alone. —Kim Phillips

A good villain is hard to find

WHITWATER SCANDALMONGERS, LACKING REAL VILLAINS, HAVE HAD TO concoct them. Recently the Republican inquisitors have pointed their fingers at Beverly Bassett Schaffer, the former Arkansas securities commissioner. Schaffer is accused of granting favors to Madison Guaranty, the savings and loan owned by the Clintons' Whitewater business partner, Jim McDougal. In 1985, Schaffer, responding to a legal query from Hillary Clinton, ruled that an S&L like Madison could issue preferred stock. That's the gist of the story offered by the GOP. But the Republicans routinely fail to note that Schaffer insisted that, before any S&L could do so, it must first demonstrate financial soundness—a provision that effectively barred the financially troubled Madison from issuing stock.

Investigators from the government's Resolution Trust Corp. have found nothing amiss in Schaffer's actions. "If anything," the RTC concluded in December 1995, "the Arkansas regulators took a more aggressive position toward Madison Guaranty than did the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB)." In fact, Schaffer had wanted to close Madison well before officials from the FHLBB finally shuttered the insolvent thrift. If officials from the notoriously corrupt FHLBB had closed the S&L when Schaffer suggested, they would have shaved more than \$50 million from the final cost of the Madison bailout. It should be noted that until Congress abolished the FHLBB in 1989, it fell under the purview of the Senate Banking Committee, on which chief Whitewater inquisitor Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) has served since 1981. —J.B.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

THE TERMINATORS

By Joel Bleifuss

In the past five years, U.S. corporations have put a couple million or so American workers out on the street. But depriving so many people of their livelihood requires a new breed of worker with special skills: the outplacement professional.

A hybrid of self-help therapist and public relations propagandist, the outplacement professional knows how to conduct the "termination meetings" at which workers being "de-employed" are given the bad news. These human resources managers are also experts at convincing the victims of "no-fault terminations" that the corporation firing them is not to blame. And they know how to reassure "the survivors of previous terminations"—which is the American Management Association (AMA) term for those who are not being laid off, yet.

Not surprisingly, outplacement is the fastest-growing specialty in the field of human resources management. Professionals in this still-evolving line of work keep up to date with the latest developments through membership in the Association of Outplacement Consulting Firms and the European-based International Association of Outplacement Professionals.

The number of people who have been outplaced during the '90s is not known, partly because the Bush administration blocked the Bureau of Labor Statistics from collecting information on mass layoffs. The AMA, however, does compile some information in an annual survey called "Corporate Downsizing." According to the AMA's 1995 report, in each of the past five years, on average, 49 percent of major U.S. companies eliminated 9 percent of their workforce. Further, the survey points out, 30 percent of those companies have announced that they plan to eliminate more jobs by the end of June 1996—the highest percentage in the survey's eight-year history. Association members, which number 8,000 companies, employ about 25 percent of the American workforce. Like the Bush administration,

the AMA is not eager to publicize the number of people its members have laid off, so its report deals only in percentages.

Conventional business wisdom sees mass layoffs as a result of global market forces. Indeed, globalization has become a mantra for devotees of corporate culture. The AMA's *Human Resources Development Handbook* notes: "Unnecessary personnel must be separated from the company if the organization is to continue as a viable business entity. ... To do otherwise in today's globally competitive world would be totally unjustified and might well be a threat to the company's future survival."

In other words, the corporate system dictates that humans must subordinate their interests to the demands of the mar-

ket—and that people who once held permanent jobs must now accept that long-term employment is antithetical to the success of this new order. At a human resources seminar in Minneapolis, outplacement consultant David Noer summed up the situation this way: "Now we are all temps." William Morin, CEO of Beam Drake Morin, one of the largest outplacement firms in the world, is more precise: He sees a workplace of the future in which "spirited teams of cross-functional employees ... will use 'virtual' staffs that rely heavily on outside consultants, contractors, suppliers and temporary employees." According to outplacement experts, today's college graduates should expect to change jobs seven to nine times during their careers, and that on average four of those changes will be involuntary.

Corporate strategists believe that the human resources managers of the future will not so much manage personnel as regulate corporations' ongoing ingestion and regurgitation of human labor. In effect, white-collar and blue-collar workers have gone back to the future and, like nonunion factory workers in the 19th century, have become a disposable input. In the 1991 book *Parting Company*, Morin and fellow outplacement pioneer James Cabrera assert: "Many companies now believe restructuring and reorganizing aren't one-time events, but a continuing strategic process determined by changing market and economic realities."

Outplacement experts understand that the insecurities of a temporary job market can have a devastating effect on individuals. Morin told the *Baltimore Sun*, "Corporations used to feel guilty about laying off people. [But today] they have gotten accustomed to terminating people. Their conscience is going away. That's a way of life." The *Wall Street Journal* quotes one executive from a high-tech firm expressing pride in the fact that there had been no suicides following a major layoff. And Noer explained to his Minneapolis audience that damage to the surviving workers cannot be ignored: "We're putting wounded survivors on a

global battlefield." (He added that these wounded corporate warriors were competing against healthier foreign competitors, not bothering to mention that corporate behavior in both Japan and the European Community is restrained by laws and cultural norms that protect human beings.) The Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* reports that one executive at the conference was overheard saying, "We will for a period of time have to carry the wounded, but at some point we may have to shoot the stragglers."

To do so, however, would further demoralize the survivors. So the job of the outplacement expert is to help the fired worker, and the survivor, channel their anger away from the corporate system. According to the AMA's handbook, a good outplacement program "significantly reduces the company's exposure to litigation." As Robert Lee, of the outplacement firm Lee Hecht Harrison, has put it: "When the terminated manager focuses his or her energies on finding new employment, there is no time for pursuing lawsuits." The handbook goes on to say that outplacement counselors must use their "clinical skills" to help the fired worker "defuse the anger, hostility and resentment toward his or her former company and avoid self-pity or righteous indignation." The counselor's primary objective, according to the handbook, is "to develop an optimistic forward-looking, self-confident perspective."

In *Parting Company*, Morin and Cabrera admit that the terminated employee has "every right to feel any emotion, no matter how strange or ugly it may seem. The question is what do you do with these feelings." In an ideal world, they insist, the ex-employee will forgo any hostility toward the company and recognize that "my most immediate concern is what I'll need to make the transition to my next job."

According to Morin and Cabrera, the laid-off worker must accept the situation "as a real, if unpleasant, fact of life" and then go on and "take responsibility for their own careers. ... Employees' fundamental goal should be to serve themselves. By doing so, they will also serve their companies more effectively than in the past."

Yet behind all the bluster, there is unease in the business community about the contradictions in corporate life that these massive layoffs expose. If the corporate system is so ideal, why are so many of its faithful servants suffering? Is ever more efficiency worth the cost in human dignity?

Through his work as CEO of one of the largest outplacement firms in the world, Morin has seen the collateral damage caused by the unfettered rush to globalization. And he is worried. In *Silent Sabotage*, published last year, Morin explores the crisis in values that he blames for the breakdown of our society—a breakdown that extends into the corporate world.

Like the corporate reformers at the turn of the century, Morin realizes that the system is under strain. From the corporate point of view, the question is how to alleviate the stress without impinging on, or even questioning, cor-

porate prerogatives. According to Morin, this can best be done by getting people to adapt their behavior so that it better meshes with the paradigm of a global marketplace ruled by transnational corporations. The subtitle of *Silent Sabotage* calls for a rescue of "our careers, our companies, and our lives from the creeping paralysis of anger and bitterness."

Morin explains that he is "tired of negative media and depressed thinking." "I'm not a card-carrying member of the doomsday crowd," he writes. "I'm anything but a left-over radical from the 1960s who longs to rekindle a rebellion." Morin maintains that "developed societies around the world" are plagued by a "values crisis" that is causing "all the other crises that afflict us these days—in business, education, real estate and health care." And like the communist threat, the threat posed by a crisis of values in the office and factory can spread. "When values break down in the workplace," Morin writes, "the domino effect ripples straight through us and ... throughout our society like a cancer, destroying everything in sight."

According to Morin, what we need to do is "rebuild" and "re-engineer" our ethics and values. He suggests that we start by developing a "personal ethics code" wherein the retooled corporate citizen would vow to "take responsibility for all of my life's challenges rather than blaming anyone for them."

"The bottom line is that our institutional problems won't change unless we as individuals change," Morin writes. And the involvement of business in directing this change is crucial. Because our economic system "forces people to work to survive," corporations are the only institutions left that have "the power to reach people at a grassroots level, and rebuild our shattered values system."

And, according to Morin, this rebuilding will entail a shift in business priorities. "Business leaders are coming to the conclusion that shareholder wealth cannot be a basis for a company's existence," he writes. Oddly, Morin cites GE chairman Jack Welch—known as "Neutron Jack" for his ability to eliminate employees while leaving buildings standing—as a model of today's enlightened CEO. Welch, as quoted by Morin, recognizes that companies "not only exist for shareholder investment, but for the fulfillment of employees." Morin and Welch both seem to suggest that the surest route to higher profits is for corporations to shift to a lower gear until the human resources are retrofitted to deal with the stresses of the new global economy. Perhaps with the help of pharmaceuticals?

"History provides us with a great mirror," Morin writes. "Civilizations that have been based on taking, power-brokering, and pyramiding by individuals of income, wealth, and position have left little to succeeding generations." Unfortunately, Morin doesn't realize that if he would switch to the present tense and substitute the word "corporations" for "civilization," he would be onto something.

POLITICS

Info-bandits

Media conglomerates hijacked telecommunications policy with millions in PAC contributions.

By Jim Naureckas

T

here's a Latin phrase that people use—*cui bono*—which translates as “for whose good?” It means that you can figure out who is responsible for a situation by looking at who benefits from it. Sometimes, though, it's easier to figure out who benefits by looking at who is responsible.

This rule greatly simplifies the task of comprehending the sweeping Telecommunications Act recently passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Supporters widely praised the bill as beneficial to the public at large. It would lower prices and improve service, they claimed, by allowing the giant conglomerates of the telecommunications industry to compete with one another. Vice President Al Gore went so far as to call it an “early Christmas present for the consumer.”

But the law was not created with consumers in

mind. In effect, the bill was bought and paid for by the very telecommunications conglomerates it is supposed to bring under the discipline of the market.

Far from mandating competition among telecommunications companies, the act encourages already-mammoth corporations to pursue further mergers and allows businesses to form alliances with their supposed rivals in other sectors, greatly reducing the risk that new technologies will provide consumers with meaningful choice.

“This was conceived as: How do you get all the industries on board? You give everyone what they want legislatively,” says Anthony Wright of the Center for Media Education, an advocacy group that tried to blunt the bill's worst excesses. “You just give as many carrots as you can. Unfortunately, the consumers weren't invited to that feast.”

This kind of special-interest lawmaking has often been the norm in Washington, but the congressional class of 1994 seems to have scaled new heights in eliminating the awkwardness of public discussion from the legislative process.

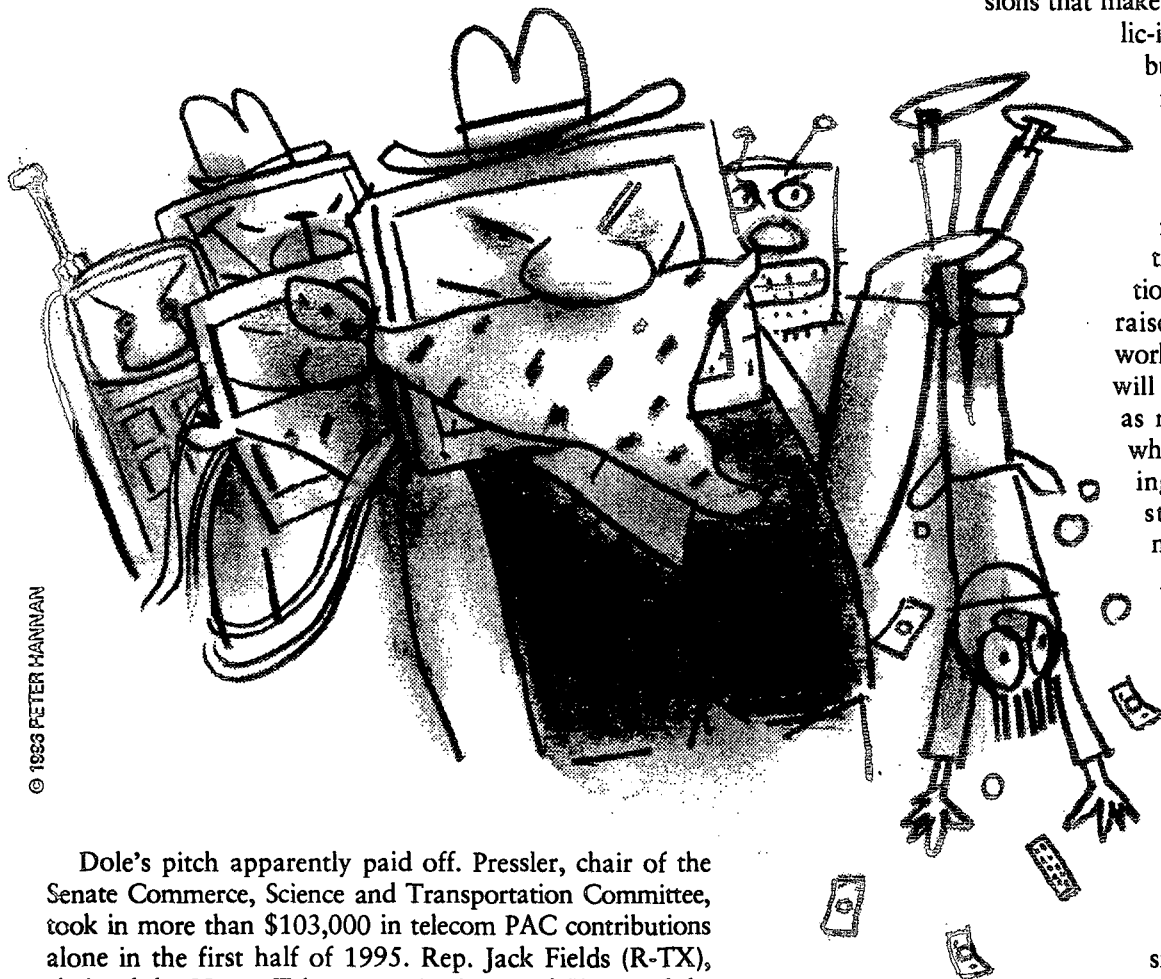
“A lot of the public-interest sector felt totally shut out,” says Kevin Taglang, who monitored the process for the Benton Foundation, which promotes public-interest media. “No one saw the final draft of the bill before it was passed. The industry found a Congress it could work with; a Congress that doesn't allow the public into the debate was a perfect setting for getting the bill through.”

“The telecom bill was to the 104th Congress what health care was to the 103rd, in terms of attracting a lot of big money contributors,” says Nancy Watzman of the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) in Washington. “It flowed in from all different sectors.” The center, one of the prime sources of information about money and politics, documented political action committee (PAC) contributions from the telecommunications industry to members of Congress in the first half of 1995. The numbers are striking: Altogether, the industry contributed more than \$2 million in that six-month period, nearly three-quarters of which went to the newly ascendant Republicans. A full \$640,000 went to the 45 representatives and senators on the joint conference committee that hammered out the final version of the bill in the late fall of 1995. By contrast, Watzman points out, “Consumer groups contributed little, if anything.”

It should be noted that these figures do not include individual contributions given by telecommunications industry executives or investors, which may amount to as much or more than the institutional PAC money. And powerful legislators sent clear messages that their votes were for sale. David Samuels of *Harper's* magazine captured the spirit in which this money changed hands in an excerpt from a speech in which Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS) shook down

Republican contributors in Massachusetts. Dole cut to the chase with admirable tact:

I want to thank Senator Pressler for coming in. I want to say just one word about Senator Pressler. He's running for re-election in '96—he takes money. He takes checks. It's legal in South Dakota to take money out of Massachusetts. Well, let me tell you something about Senator Pressler. There are probably a lot of people here interested in the Telecommunications Bill—it's the best thing that we've done all year as far as the future's concerned in technology and jobs. And the chairman of that committee, and the one leading the effort right now on a day-to-day basis, has been Senator Larry Pressler from South Dakota. Larry, thank you very much.



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Dole's pitch apparently paid off. Pressler, chair of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, took in more than \$103,000 in telecom PAC contributions alone in the first half of 1995. Rep. Jack Fields (R-TX), chair of the House Telecommunications and Finance Subcommittee, followed close behind with almost \$98,000. Rep. Thomas Bliley (R-VA), who chairs the committee that oversees Fields' subcommittee, received \$31,000. Members were rewarded in proportion to their power over the bill, and to their enthusiasm for advancing industry goals. "It was an investment," says the Center for Media Education's Wright. "For most of the companies, it paid off quite well."

In addition to the money that went directly into legislators' campaign chests, industry coffers paid for expensive

lobbying campaigns. "Every trade association and every corporation in every industry had representatives in Washington," Wright says. These lobbyists-for-hire were selected for their connections: Ex-members of Congress and former staffers of key officials were in high demand.

As is often the case in contemporary Washington, the lobbyists' involvement went beyond persuading, cajoling or even doling out money to members. To a great extent, the lobbyists took over the act of writing legislation itself. "If you want to be a serious player, you're asked to submit language," said Jamie Love of the Center for Study of Responsive Law, a Naderite consumer group.

Looking at industry's campaign contributions, lobbying efforts and bill-writing is the only way to explain much of the Telecommunications Act. The law is filled with provisions that make no sense from a public-interest point of view but make perfect sense for the industries involved. Consider the deregulation of broadcasting. In the name of "competition," limits on TV station ownership are being raised so much that networks like ABC and NBC will be able to buy twice as many stations. (CBS, whose new owner, Westinghouse, already had stations of its own, needed the limit raised just to avoid having to sell off stations.)

In radio, all national limits on station ownership are eliminated under the bill; on the local level, one company may own as many as eight stations in a large market. In smaller markets, two companies will be allowed to own all the stations between them.

The bill also guarantees that when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assigns new space on the broadcast spectrum for digital television, the only entities that will get a chance to be assigned such space will be those that already have TV stations.

Furthermore, because of a new technology known as data compression, the new broadcast frequencies being given for digital TV will be much wider than needed to

duplicate traditional analog TV programming. Under a provision of the bill known as "spectrum flexibility," broadcasters will be able to use this technology to put out four or five different different channels in the space formerly occupied by one. Or they can use the excess spectrum to sell something completely different—cellular phone service, say, or paging systems. They can use it for whatever they want: It's "flexible."

For decades, the FCC has regulated ownership of stations, saying that it was necessary to prevent concentrated ownership from monopolizing scarce spectrum space. One might expect regulators to regard new technologies like data compression as an opportunity to bring new voices into the broadcast discussion that have previously been shut out. But the Telecommunications Act looks at the spectrum not as a public resource to be shared, but as a private preserve whose investment value must be protected. Granting multitudes of new licenses would deplete the value of those already on the market.

The merits of the broadcasters' case no doubt became clearer to legislators thanks to the PAC money the National Association of Broadcasters showered on Congress (\$142,000 in the first half of 1995). On top of that came big money from other companies with interests in broadcasting, such as General Electric, Time Warner and Viacom. The network point of view also got a boost from lobbyists like Fox's Peggy Binzel, who was formerly legislative director for Rep. Fields of the Telecommunications Subcommittee. On the Democratic side, the networks enlisted the help of Martin Franks, a senior vice president at CBS and the former head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

With this kind of money and talent, the networks were able to roll over Dole when at the last minute he objected to the spectrum flexibility plan as "corporate welfare." Some observers believe Dole demurred out of loyalty to other telecommunications companies that had paid good money to the FCC for rights to use spectrum space for cell phone services and the like; they didn't want to be competing with networks that had gotten such space for free. Others suggest that Dole just hasn't liked broadcasters lately. "The networks had been giving him lousy reporting on the shutdown of the government," one analyst noted.

Whatever his motives, Dole was unable to delay a bill that offered goodies not only to the broadcasters but to the entire range of telecommunications sectors. In the end, Dole had to settle for an assurance that the FCC would not go

ahead with the spectrum giveaway before Congress had a chance to re-examine the issue. But few expect Dole to make any legislative headway before the networks are happily camped out on their new spectrum.

If the broadcast provisions of the Telecommunications Act aim to preserve and expand the dominant positions of TV and radio networks, the sections of the bill that deal with cable have an even more perverse purpose: They allow cable companies to take full advantage of their local monopolies, and encourage them to make financial alliances with potential competitors from other telecommunications sectors.

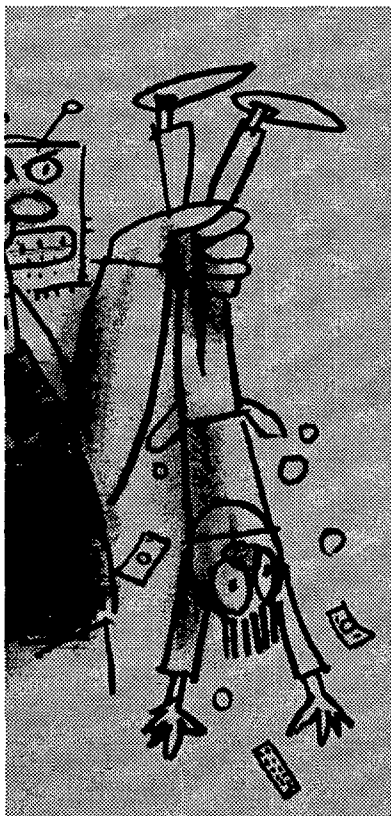
Local and regional telephone companies will now be allowed to compete with cable companies to provide video service; cable companies, in turn, are authorized to provide phone service. But cable companies and regional phone companies are both local monopolies—and make the kind of profits that only monopolies can. There is little incentive for either to lay out the massive investment necessary to go into the business of the other, only to reap the greatly reduced profits available in a competitive environment. It would be like a newspaper chain trying to launch a new daily in a city where another chain already had a local monopoly. It just doesn't happen.

Instead of competing, these industries are likely to collude, and the Telecommunications Act does much to encourage them to do so. In areas with fewer than 35,000 people, for example, the local phone company can

completely buy out the local cable company (or vice versa, though telephone companies generally have more cash to play with). Elsewhere, telephone and cable companies may buy a 10 percent stake in each other—which is enough to ensure that the two industries see no economic sense in going after each other.

The chimera of cable-telephone competition was used to justify granting the cable industry its heart's desire: total deregulation of cable prices, starting in 1999. (Smaller systems, as well as those where the phone company is providing virtually anything that can be labeled competition, will be deregulated immediately.)

As the Center for Media Education's Wright points out, "A deregulated monopoly is the worst of both worlds." *Consumer Reports* estimated last year that deregulation of cable rates (under a less sweeping proposal) would result in a 50 percent hike in the average monthly cable bill. Not a bad return on the cable lobbyists' investment—\$264,000 in the first six months of 1995 alone. TCI, the largest cable company, by itself gave \$200,000 in soft money to the Republican Party days before the '94 election.



The bill's most contentious dispute—and the most expensive, in terms of influence-peddling—pitted regional Bell telephone companies against long-distance carriers. The Baby Bells—cash-rich companies such as Nynex, Ameritech and BellSouth—wanted access to the long-distance market. The long-distance companies—mainly AT&T, MCI and Sprint, though there are many others—wanted to keep the Baby Bells out of their business, unless the Baby Bells gave up a significant share of the local market.

The long-distance companies have good reason to fear competition with the regional Bells. Though both AT&T, still the leading long-distance provider, and the Baby Bells sprang from the break-up of the old Bell Telephone monopoly, they've since evolved into quite different businesses. While AT&T has been dogged by genuine competition with the other long-distance companies, as their constant struggle to snatch customers from each other demonstrates, the Baby Bells have grown quite rich from their local monopolies.

Owning the phone wires leading to individual homes has given local phone companies a great deal of power over consumers. Up to now, they've switched customers from one long-distance service to another with a minimum of bother. But once they've entered the long-distance market themselves, they may not act so obligingly when customers seek to switch to their competitors. "There are all sorts of things cable and phone companies can do to prevent competition," says the Center for Media Education's Wright.

With untold billions at stake in this battle, both sides brought out the big guns. The long-distance companies' lobbyists were particularly impressive: AT&T hired political heavyweights such as Republicans Charles Black and Vin Weber as well as Democrat Robert Strauss, not to mention the law firm of Reagan Chief of Staff Howard Baker. MCI, for its part, retained the ubiquitous lawyer-lobbyist Tommy Boggs.

The long-distance companies had more famous names, but the Baby Bells outspent them: The local and regional telephone companies gave more than \$847,000 in PAC money to Congress in the first half of 1995—heavily targeted at Republicans and members of the key committees—while long-distance companies gave \$371,000.

And the Baby Bells' lobbyists, while less recognizable to the average C-Span junkie, were more strategically connected: BellSouth's Daniel Mattoon, for example, is not only a former Republican House staffer, but, as *Legal Times*' T.R. Goldman pointed out, "also chairs the National Republican Congressional Committee's PAC Advisory Committee, the influential group that hands out money to candidates around the country." That's not a person Republican lawmakers want to be on the bad side of.

BellSouth's vice president for government affairs, Ward White, who hails from Robert Dole's hometown of Russell, Kan., spent two years working on the senator's staff. The BellSouth team was so well-connected, in fact, that BellSouth's R.L. "Mickey" McGuire was said to have written

much of the law's language. "Mickey's fingerprints are all over this bill," one observer told *Legal Times*.

Not surprisingly, the final draft of the act favored the Baby Bells over long-distance carriers. AT&T and its allies were hoping to make regional companies' entry into the long-distance market contingent on certification by the Justice Department. Instead, the Justice Department will merely play an advisory role as the FCC unleashes the Baby Bells.

If the public-interest point of view was lost in the debate over the Telecommunications Act, it was because the bill's primary beneficiaries included media corporations—the same institutions that, in theory, are supposed to inform the public about what its elected representatives are up to.

"The broadcasters made no effort whatsoever to cover the huge giveaways they were getting under the legislation," notes Andy Schwartzman of the Media Access Project, which advocates for public-interest communications reform. According to the *Tyndall Report*, a newsletter that tracks the amount of time nightly network newscasts devote to various issues, neither the passage nor the signing of the most sweeping telecommunications legislation in 60 years made the top 10 stories in their respective weeks.

What coverage there was focused on the probably unconstitutional restrictions on Internet indecency and on the V-chip. Rhetorical attacks on "immoral" speech, a routine many Republicans can probably now perform in their sleep, served to distract attention from the bill's pro-corporate economic agenda.

Print media covered the story little better—in large part because nearly every major newspaper group owns a stake in broadcast media, cable or both. When the *New York Times* editorialized that "after four years of legislative struggle, there was one clear winner—the consumer," it overlooked another clear winner: the New York Times Co., whose five TV stations and two radio stations will vastly appreciate as a result of deregulation.

Jim Naureckas is the editor of *Extra!*, the magazine of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting). Michael Dolny contributed research assistance to this article.

Have Your Kids Turned Republican? Want To Get Even?

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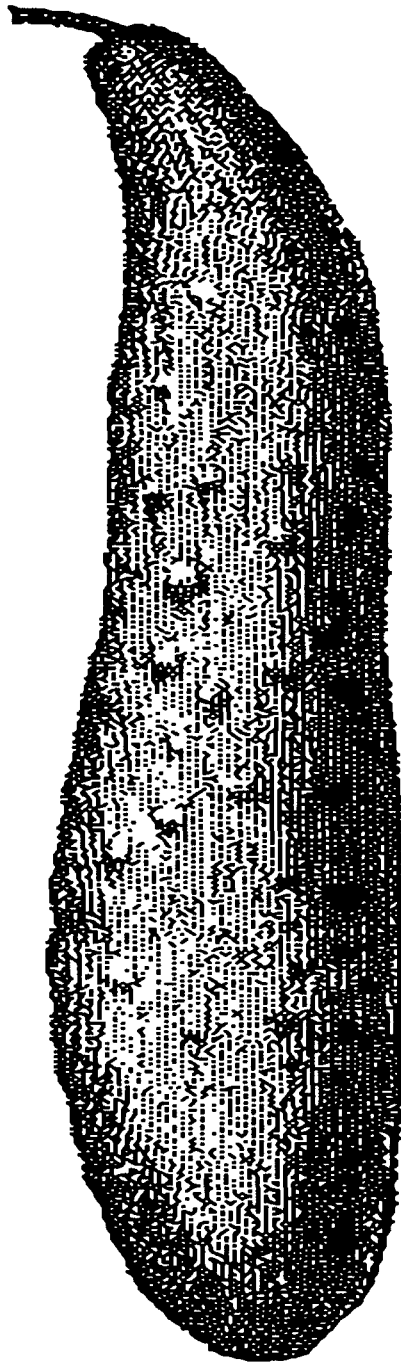
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CAMPAIGN '96

Standing Pat

“T

*The GOP
confronts the
candidate of the
“new American
revolution.”*

By Jennifer
Gonnerman
MANCHESTER, N.H.

he second American revolution has just begun!” shouted Joe Schwarz, 38, when he learned that Pat Buchanan had won the New Hampshire primary. Just one of the hundreds of demonstrative white men who packed into Buchanan’s victory party in Manchester, Schwarz spent much of the evening with his ear glued to a pay phone, singing Buchanan’s praises over the airwaves of a local radio station. Inside the party, revved-up supporters chanted Pat’s name and cried out: “It’s an insurrection, brother! It’s an insurrection!” The military-speak seemed fitting for a campaign that the candidate himself had recently characterized as an uprising of peasants with pitchforks.

But it was not just working-class supporters who waved signs at Buchanan’s victory celebration. School

teachers and lawyers in fresh-pressed suits crowded next to truck drivers and secretaries to cheer on the former *Crossfire* commentator. Wedding economic populism and social conservatism, Buchanan made his message work across class lines. Delivering fiery speeches across the state in the days before the primary, Buchanan harvested scores of voters who had grown disenchanted with the Republican political establishment.

Buchanan now has three gold medals and a silver, as he himself likes to say. With a close second-place finish in the Iowa caucuses and victories in Alaska, Louisiana and New Hampshire, the momentum behind Buchanan’s campaign is formidable. But Buchanan’s chances of winning the GOP nomination remain slim. At the end of January, he had just \$101,192 in his campaign coffers, while Bob Dole had \$4.8 million. But Buchanan’s rise already has establishment Republicans trembling about what his growing popularity means for

the future of their party—and for their chances of reclaiming the White House.

The New Hampshire campaign showed they have much to fear. Revival music boomed through the Littleton Opera House as a crowd of 100 people perched on the edge of their fold-out chairs and chanted the refrain: “Go Pat Go!” It was seven days before the New Hampshire primary, and Buchanan had driven to the state’s north country for a “Go Pat Go!” rally. The population in Littleton is sparser, poorer and more rural than the rest of the state. And it was voters in towns like this one who gave Buchanan the critical edge in his narrow victory over Dole. Though the New Hampshire economy has improved significantly since the state’s last primary battle four years ago, almost everyone in Littleton knows someone who has just lost their job. Several area factories recently packed up and moved out of the country. In towns like Littleton, Buchanan’s attacks on the North American Free Trade Agreement and his pledge to restore America’s greatness resonate strongly with voters.

After the rally, Joe Barton, a 48-year-old window salesman, said, “It was very uplifting, it provided hope. He really shedded the despair that people had been feeling.” Barton, who has spent the last month following Buchanan to campaign appearances around the state, said, “He’s building an army with each and every presentation he makes.”

Buchanan has targeted his message at the disaffected, and he seems to have hit his mark. Though his campaign speeches varied little in the final weeks before the primary, his blend of charisma and enthusiasm ensured that his rallies were the best show in the state. Other candidates’



**Pat Buchanan in
New Hampshire**

campaigns, by contrast, ground along with deadening monotony or resorted to corny gimmicks. By the end of its New Hampshire leg, Sen. Bob Dole's campaign was so closely scripted that Elizabeth Dole's stump speeches even included an intentional stutter for emphasis. "We would be privileged to have you working with us to make these s-s-significant changes," she intoned on cue at three different whistle-stops. Steve Forbes had repeated the same speech so many times that he frequently forgot to pause after his jokes to give the audience time to laugh. And Lamar Alexander's campaign workers handed out dozens of his trademark red-and-black plaid shirts at rallies so supporters would be wearing them when the television camera crews arrived.

Buchanan's campaign clearly owes much of its appeal, and its success at the polls, to the sheer novelty of the candidate's message. While his opponents sounded upbeat themes with conventional feel-good language, like Forbes' promise of "hope, growth and opportunity," Buchanan highlighted his break with traditional GOP ideology. The enthusiastic applause Buchanan gets for his attacks on NAFTA and GATT has taken his opponents by surprise. In the final days before the primary vote, Dole attempted to play catch-up and began weaving some of Buchanan's anti-corporate ideas into his own campaign speeches. But Dole's words rang hollow, and, on the day of the primary, his detachment from the concerns of New Hampshire voters became painfully evident. "I didn't realize that jobs and trade and what makes America work would become a big issue in the last few days of this campaign," Dole said. The

laughing. The longer Buchanan leads the pack of presidential contenders, the greater the chances are that his ideas will split the Republican Party and help Bill Clinton win re-election in November.

In his standard stump speech, Buchanan attacks many of his fellow Republicans with the same harsh rhetoric he trains on Clinton. Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich are the targets of Buchanan's rant against the U.S. government's recent decision to bail out Mexico after the peso's value plummeted. With obvious scorn, Buchanan accuses Dole and Gingrich of sending millions to Mexico "so they could pay off Citibank, Chase Manhattan and Goldman Sachs." This line generated enormous enthusiasm in New Hampshire: Crowds could all too easily envision their hard-earned tax dollars trickling into the hands of wealthy New Yorkers. Buchanan's attacks on corporate greed have become the staple of his campaign, receiving far more attention than his anti-abortion and anti-gun control stances.

"What's going on in our country when AT&T lops off 40,000 jobs, and the executioner that does it is a big hit on the cover of all these magazines and AT&T stock soars?" he shouted to a standing ovation in Manchester. Buchanan's handlers might have considered such pronouncements dangerous in his 1992 run for the presidency, but now they're sure-fire applause lines.

Preaching what he calls "a new conservatism of the heart," Buchanan has promised to "speak out for working-class Americans who have been betrayed by these trade deals." But his anti-corporate populism is tinged with a disturbing xenophobia. "There's something more at stake here than simply money, and that's the sovereignty of the United

Manchester Union-Leader, a fervent supporter of Buchanan, placed Dole's embarrassing admission on its front page.

Buchanan delights in de-scribing his economic policies as a challenge to the Republican party's traditional commitment to free trade. He has boasted that his original opposition to NAFTA put him in the company of Ross Perot, Ralph Nader and Jesse Jackson, and joked that some critics have labeled his anti-corporate message "socialist." But the GOP's braintrust isn't

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Portsmouth, turning his venom toward politicians of both parties. "What are they doing surrendering our sovereignty to these institutions of a global new world order? Surrendering things for which our fathers fought for some lousy trade deal? Giving away our sovereignty to institutions like the World Trade Organization where we Americans get one vote out of 120 and our vote can be canceled by Bangladesh or Burundi?"

With the same militancy that has infused his nationalistic rhetoric, Buchanan has called his supporters to arms in what he calls the country's "cultural war." At times, however, his crusade more closely resembles a holy war, or even a class war. When discussing the state of American education, for example, Buchanan strikes near-theocratic poses. "Look what's happening in those schools. In the last 30 years, God, the Bible and the 10 Commandments have all been expelled," he said at a Christian Coalition rally in Manchester. "[If] the King of England said, 'Get all the Bibles out of your schools—that's an order!' you know what the Founding Fathers would have said? Three little words: Lock and load." Catching himself, Buchanan laughed and, turning to the more than 100 reporters in the room, added, "Don't get the wrong idea, press corps. We're doing this peacefully."

At other times, Buchanan has cast himself as the average-white-guy-as-victim to pander to popular perceptions of an elitist media and an indifferent political establishment. If he were elected president, Buchanan once joked, "The *Washington Post* would have a horrible four years." Such defiance has allowed him to sidestep the charge that surfaced the week before the primary vote that one of his campaign's national co-chairmen, Larry Pratt, has ties to white supremacist organizations. "The liberal elite establishment makes a statement, and all of a sudden everyone else cowers," said Willie Casagrande, a fervent Buchanan supporter who came up to New Hampshire from Maryland to rally behind the candidate. "But not Pat. Pat will stand up and say, 'Wait a minute, prove it.'"

Lester Cearer, a 71-year-old Buchanan booster, agreed. "I think [the allegations about Pratt] are only going to add to Buchanan's popularity," he opined, pundit-style. "I think the average people have so little respect for the press and for politicians in general that they're only going to see this as a major effort to trash him, and I think they're

going to respond by voting for him."

On the whole, Buchanan's supporters seemed little troubled by their candidate's possible associations with a white supremacist group. But then, witnessing a Buchanan rally can give the impression that little separates many of his devotees from such right-wing extremists. At the final "Go Pat Go" rally before the February 20 primary, enthusiastic supporters interrupted Buchanan's speech with spirited outbursts about such hated topics as Clinton and the IRS. "What are you going to do about the BATF, Pat?" one supporter shouted. When a man in the crowd started waving a pro-Clinton sign and attracting the attention of angry Buchanan supporters, the candidate himself had to intervene and ask his supporters to leave the Clintonite alone. Wisely, Buchanan's aides had refused to permit supporters to bring in Buchanan posters that had wooden stakes attached to them. Such zealotry may bode ill for Buchanan's candidacy if he is unable to control the angry enthusiasm he has helped create. And it will be difficult for Buchanan to escape responsibility should any of his far-right supporters interpret his "lock and load" rhetoric literally. "When I was in Nashua [at the February 19 rally], I got goose bumps," said Joe Barton. "What Buchanan says evokes dedication and total commitment. The crowd was an extension of Pat himself."

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B L A C K A M E R I C A

Marching in place

More than four months after the fact, the Nation of Islam is still attempting to convince the National Park Service to increase its official estimate of the turnout for the NOI's Million Man March. The agency's initial count of 400,000 has been roundly criticized, with the Boston University Center for Remote Sensing concluding that the crowd ranged between 850,000 and 1.4 million.

*Was the
Million Man
March
a milestone of
post-political
protest?*

But whatever the actual number was, it did little to alter the sentiments of about 60 senators who voted to cut Medicaid just two days after the October 16 event. The next day these same men decided to end welfare as we know it by compelling welfare recipients to find nonexistent jobs or lose their benefits.

In short, the march seemed to have little overt effect on the policy direction established by the Republican sweep of the

1994 elections. Since October, a bipartisan, biracial group of House members has urged President Bill Clinton to appoint a blue ribbon commission to "report on the progress and failures that our nation has made on race since 1968." But the Clinton administration has yet to respond to that appeal, and few expect that it ever will. Although Clinton delivered a speech on race relations at the University of Texas on the same day as the march, he has been mute on the issue since then. In fact, his 1996 State of the Union address omitted the subject of race altogether—something done by no other president since Dwight Eisenhower. Rather than facilitate the kind of candid discussions crucial to racial reconciliation, the march appears to have had the opposite effect.

"No politician wants to appear to be appeasing or mollifying the convener of the march, Minister Louis Farrakhan," says Robert Starks, political science professor at Northeastern Illinois University's Center for Inner-City Studies. "So, rather than make any

meaningful response to the largest demonstration of black people in U.S. history, white politicians prefer to ignore us and act as if October 16 never happened." Starks was chairman of the committee that composed the Million Man March Manifesto, a little-noticed document that made explicit demands on the U.S. government and was considerably more policy-oriented than the more publicized Mission Statement, which was drafted by Maulana Karenga, chair of the Department of Black Studies at California State University-Long Beach and creator of the Kwanzaa holiday. Karenga read the entire Mission Statement from the podium during the march.

The manifesto called for a repeal of the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill and "its attendant Jail-Industrial-Complex legislation," an expansion of federally funded educational efforts and more aggressive action against environmental racism, among other things. Many march organizers pushed for a greater emphasis on policy demands, but NOI leadership thought it best to stress the event's less political themes. And, in truth, the ecumenical theme of "atonement" that Farrakhan chose for the march allowed men with a broad range of motives to gather under its rubric; his lack of focus helped attract the huge crowd.

Still, many in the crowd were there that day to express their displeasure with the GOP's mean-spirited policies; chants of "down with Newt" often echoed through the huge throng. The Rev. Jesse Jackson spoke to some of those concerns in his speech. "Did Minister Farrakhan organize this march?" he asked. "No, he did not. Clarence Thomas and Newt Gingrich organized the march."

But other than Jackson and New York activist Al Sharpton—who said the march's energy "could reverse the nega-

By Salim Muwakkil

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tive action of the conservative Welfare Reform bill, the Medicare bill and the Mandatory Drug Sentencing bill”—few other speakers made explicit references to political issues. Instead, the march’s overarching themes were spiritual, psychological and fraternal.

Although the bulk of his speech focused on issues of symbolism, theology and culture, Farrakhan later said he never meant to downplay the march’s political importance. In a recent radio address, Farrakhan explained that he conceived the march in part to serve as a dramatic demonstration of black people’s anger about recent political developments. “It seemed that we had lost our will to resist, to protest,” he said. “I wanted the march to be a powerful symbol of that resistance.”

David Bositis, senior analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based, black-oriented think tank, agrees in this case with Farrakhan’s assessment. “Until August, I had the feeling that a lot of black politicians and activists were really shell-shocked by the 1994 elections,” Bositis says. Farrakhan’s march was popular, he argues, because black people have been extremely anxious about their status and are looking for sure-footed leaders.

Bositis believes that the new sense of possibility engendered by the march, coupled with modest Democratic success in November’s off-year elections, seems to have provided a rallying point for black leadership. Progressive activists hope the combination will rouse black Americans from their political torpor and supply some energy to help reverse GOP gains in 1996. Farrakhan’s recent pledge to lead an effort to register 8 million eligible but unregistered black voters fueled that hope. But early signs of a black political revival are not encouraging. In Illinois, for example, only 19 percent of registered voters in the state’s pre-

dominantly black 2nd District turned out for the December 12 special election won by Jesse Jackson Jr.

The Million Man March may have been the largest black demonstration in U.S. history, but it was also the vaguest. When black labor leader A. Philip Randolph threatened to march on Washington in 1941, he was clearly aiming to end segregation in America’s defense plants. The mere threat of such a march persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue an executive order desegregating the defense industry. Similarly, the 1963 Washington March for Jobs and Justice—again called by

Randolph and organized by Randolph’s associate, Bayard Rustin—triggered the process that produced the 1964 Civil Rights Act. And the 1964 campaign by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to gain black political access in Selma, Ala.—and the violent response it provoked—led to the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Though less than six months have elapsed since the 1995 march, it seems clear that Farrakhan’s demonstration won’t produce the kind of policy shifts won by his predecessors. It has, however, generated unprecedented publicity for the 62-year-old NOI leader. He is now welcome in many venues formerly closed to him. The National Newspaper Publishers Association, which represents most of the country’s black newspapers, recently named him Man of the Year. And he has received numerous other awards from mainstream black groups around the country.

Members of Farrakhan’s entourage on his recent “World Friendship Tour” report that the NOI leader received head-of-state treatment in each of the 22 countries he visited. No doubt that respect derived from his status as “organizer” of the Million Man March. At virtually every stop he tweaked the U.S.; in Iran, for example, Farrakhan joined the local leadership in denouncing the U.S. as the “Great Satan.” The controversy churned up by this tour will enable Farrakhan to maintain the outrageous, insurgent edge that makes him so attractive to those elements of the black community that remain oblivious to more mainstream leadership.

But Farrakhan’s foreign adventures will infuriate the Republican in control of Congress and further imperil any public policy initiatives linked to the Million Man March. And this ongoing dynamic will lessen the likelihood that black America’s largest demonstration of social discontent will ever be separated from the taint of Farrakhan. ◀

L A B O R

Out from Chavez's shadow

The United Farm Workers enjoy a renaissance in California.

By G. Pascal Zachary

Two years ago, in the hot, dusty fields of Sonoma County, Calif., the United Farm Workers (UFW) caught the E & J Gallo Winery by surprise. Workers at the famous winemaker's Sonoma grape ranches were angry over what they considered stingy piece rates, the severe and arbitrary discipline of Gallo supervisors and the company's unwillingness to respect the seniority of veteran workers.

Gallo's roughly 100 full-time field hands had turned to the UFW for help. Initially, the company assumed that the long-moribund union posed little threat. But two weeks before the July 1994 representation election, Gallo finally realized it was facing a serious organizing drive. Gallo hastily hired a new manager who promised fairer treatment to the company's overwhelmingly Mexican-born workforce, but the vote still went

against Gallo by a 4-to-1 margin.

"I feel better since the election," says Jose Salas, a 14-year veteran of Gallo's Sonoma ranches. "My foreman used to order me to do a job, yelling at me. Now he says 'please' and, when I'm thirsty, asks me if I need a drink."

The victory at Gallo marked an early chapter in the UFW's remarkable resurgence in the fields of California. The UFW, which originally arose out of the 1960s civil rights movement, was left for dead in the '80s, but has since roared back to life. Over the past 18 months, the number of UFW members under contract has increased by one-third, and the union has won a dozen consecutive representation elections.

"We're rejuvenated," says Arturo Rodriguez, the UFW's president for the last three years. "It's been 15 years since we've seen this kind of [worker] militancy." Under Rodriguez, a veteran UFW staffer, the union has emerged once more as the nation's most effective advocate for farm workers. Accord-

ing to many observers, the union reversed more than a decade of decline by breaking decisively with the policies of its late founder, Cesar Chavez, who before his death in 1993 had essentially abandoned field organizing and contract negotiations in favor of political lobbying and promotion of the UFW's table-grape boycott.

"Rodriguez has really rehabilitated and revived the UFW," says Don Villarejo, director of the California Institute of Rural Studies in Davis and a longtime observer of the UFW. "They are a lot more professional today, more thoughtful and less reliant on sloganeering." Given Chavez's standing as a secular saint among Mexican Americans, Villarejo says, "it took a lot of courage for [Rodriguez] to chart a new direction for the union, to say it's time to go back into the fields and de-emphasize the boycott."

But Rodriguez, son-in-law of the late Chavez, bristles at the suggestion that the UFW's revival dates from Chavez's death. And he dismisses suggestions that the table-grape boycott, for which Chavez may be best remembered, has outlived its usefulness. "We're able to do the work we do today because of all the work Cesar did for 30 years," Rodriguez says. "Had he not created the consciousness among American consumers, we wouldn't be able to get to square one."

Still, the UFW currently has no active campaigns to organize table-grape workers and is, in any case, downplaying the boycott. "It's not the thing we champion right now," Rodriguez admits. "It's not the thing we publicize. Yet it's a tradition among many people to honor the grape boycott. So maybe right now our focus is not right there for whatever reason. But the growers know the pressure is there and sense it, although they'll deny it." There is scant evidence of

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UFW President
Arturo Rodriguez (right)

this, however. At the time of Chavez's death in 1993, the UFW had no contracts with table-grape growers. It still doesn't have any.

The tactical retreat from the table-grape campaign has allowed the union to rebuild its base among California's farmworkers—whose ranks have changed enormously since the union's founding in 1962. A quarter-century ago nine out of 10 California farm workers worked directly for a grower, and half were born in the United States. Today, one in three work for contractors, who provide labor to growers for a fee. "Ruinous underbidding for labor has occurred as growers play off one contractor against another," says David Runsten, a farm-labor economist in San Jose, Calif. "The workers bear the brunt of this." In addition, swelling immigration from Mexico—more than 90 percent of field hands today are foreign-born—has intensified competition among California farm workers and contributed to a decline in wages of at least 10 percent since 1990.

That drop in income has been a key factor in the rising militance among farm workers. "We want more because it takes more to raise a family and survive," says Salvador Peña, a farmhand in Watsonville, Calif., who works for Monterey Mushroom, the state's largest mushroom supplier. A rank-and-file activist, Peña last year helped the UFW regain a contract with Monterey, where 450 workers had seen wages fall steadily in the few years since they bolted the union in frustration over lack of support. "To get more, every worker must be an organizer," Peña argues. The key to winning a contract at Monterey was a wildcat walkout in September by mushroom pickers—and the UFW's newfound appreciation for everyday worker issues.

Even after winning a raise, Peña's wage of \$8.20 an hour is still 15 cents less than he earned five years ago. But he isn't complaining about the union's willingness to accept modest wage pacts. Before Chavez's death, "I promised Cesar I'd bring the UFW back into mushrooms," he says.

"We are on our way."

Fierce resistance from many growers persists, however. Even at Gallo, more than a year and a half after winning the representation election, the UFW still has yet to negotiate a contract with the company. Though Gallo has failed in numerous court battles to overturn the 1994 election, the company refuses to bargain with the UFW, holding out the possibility of further legal action.

Gallo's intransigence underscores the limits of the UFW's power. It still isn't financially independent (as much as one-fifth of its \$4 million annual budget comes from donations), and its total membership of about 20,000 is only one-fifth of its peak during the 1970s.

After the company failed to reverse the election in court, workers say it has tried to isolate pro-union employees from newer workers and repeatedly offered a supervisory position to Salvador Mendoza, the rank-and-file leader at Gallo. Steve Swaysey, a spokesman for Gallo, defends the company's treatment of workers, saying it offers them better pay and benefits—employees earn an average of \$8 an hour and receive basic health care and vacations—than other growers in the region. Workers don't dispute this but say they've received only tiny raises since the late 1980s, have no way to settle job-related grievances and accrue no benefits from seniority. "We should do better. Our cost of living is rising, and we don't keep up," says Mendoza.

Gallo's refusal to deal with the UFW isn't unusual; scores of California growers have also shunned the union. Despite gaining a reputation under Rodriguez for pragmatic settlements with growers, the union so far hasn't come up with a way to draw Gallo into negotiations. The delay has been tough on the workers. "We feel bad Gallo won't talk with us," says Daniel Arcilla, a tractor driver who has worked 10 years for the winery. "They see us as little children. They play with us."

Still, Mendoza is convinced the field hands would, if asked, vote overwhelmingly in favor of the UFW again. And his co-workers insist that their affiliation with the union has already brought symbolic—if not material—gains.

Of course, symbolic victories are hardly all that workers want from their union drive, concedes Salas, the 14-year Gallo veteran. But it seems to him that with the UFW behind him "at least I've gained the company's respect." ◀ G. Pascal Zachary, a writer based in Berkeley, Calif., reports often on labor and the economy.

I R E L A N D

Troubling news

T

hree months ago, an ominous piece of graffiti appeared on a wall in the solidly Catholic Andersonstown section of Belfast. With Northern Ireland's peace process at a standstill, someone decided to send a message to Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, who had played a decisive role in persuading the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) to declare a cease-fire in its "long war" against the British. The message was brief, but unmistakable: "Adams—Remember Collins IRA," a chilling reference to Michael Collins, the republican leader who was assassinated by his former comrades soon after he signed the 1921 treaty that ratified the partition of Ireland.

A spokesperson for Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, dismissed the graffiti as the work of a "small group of people"

who were using "their limited talents and intelligence" in an effort to overturn the cease-fire. The graffiti was quickly cleaned from the Andersonstown wall, but its very appearance was an all too visible sign that the fragile republican consensus that had sustained the cease-fire since August 1994 was beginning to break down.

Less than two months later, on February 9, an IRA bomb ripped through London's Canary Wharf, and the IRA's 18-month cease-fire was officially over. Some had hoped that the Canary Wharf bombing was a "shot across the bow" of the British government—a crude attempt by the IRA to reinject a sense of urgency in the stalled peace process. But such hopes quickly faded when a second bomb exploded on a London bus 11 days later.

It remains to be seen to what extent the IRA's military campaign will escalate—and whether it will be confined to England or spread to Northern Ireland as well. But even if the IRA refrains from attacks in the

North, it is perhaps only a matter of time before Protestant paramilitaries break their cease-fire and resume terrorist activities. And now that British troops are being redeployed to Northern Ireland, old enmities are sure to resurface.

To understand how Northern Ireland reached its latest impasse—and to determine whether there is any realistic hope for moving beyond it—one must chart the long chain of events that led up to the IRA's August 1994 cease-fire.

Up until 1981, Sinn Féin had been, in Gerry Adams' own words, little more than "the IRA's poor second cousin." The party, which espoused an uncompromising nationalism, had traditionally abstained from participating in electoral politics. But that year, Sinn Féin opted to enter the electoral arena and it quickly emerged as a cohesive and well-organized force. Riding a wave of public sympathy generated by the 1981-82 hunger strikes of Republican prisoners, Sinn Féin proved a serious contender in Northern Ireland elections. In 1983 parliamentary elections, Sinn Féin captured 43 percent of the nationalist vote, stunning the moderate nationalists of the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP).

Sinn Féin seemed poised to overtake the SDLP, and its show of strength alarmed the political establishments in both London and Dublin. A desire to check Sinn Féin's electoral advance played no small part in the framing of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement—which, for the first time, granted the Dublin government a role (albeit strictly consultative) in the political affairs of the North. The agreement was, in part, an effort to strengthen the position of the SDLP—and thereby limit further political advances on the part of Sinn Féin.

Has British reluctance to convene all-party talks destroyed Northern Ireland's best chance for lasting peace?

By Colin McArthur

**Sinn Féin President****Gerry Adams**

Sinn Féin's support leveled off, running between one-quarter and one-third of the nationalist vote, or 10 to 15 percent of the overall population in the North. The party's entry into dialogue with SDLP leader John Hume in 1988 signalled that an internal debate was under way within the republican movement. In various speeches and interviews, Sinn Féin leaders appeared to be distancing themselves from the IRA's military campaign and expressed a flexibility and willingness to explore peaceful avenues to settlement of the conflict in the North. In October 1990, Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness met privately with a representative of the British Foreign Office, a meeting that laid the groundwork for further discussions between Sinn Féin leaders and the British government.

In December 1993, the British and Irish governments jointly released the Downing Street Declaration, which laid out a broad set of principles for shaping future negotiations on a constitutional settlement in the North; at the same time, it offered a place at the negotiating table to all parties that were "committed to exclusively peaceful means."

But even as Sinn Féin was pursuing diplomatic discussions with British officials, the IRA intensified its bombing

campaigns, conducting a devastating attack on the City of London in the spring of 1993 that caused billions of dollars in property damage. Foreign investment houses, concerned over the safety of doing business in the City of London, pressured Britain to do something about its Irish problem.

In the months following the Downing Street Declaration, Hume, then-Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds, the Clinton administration and an influential group of Irish-Americans all sought to convince Sinn Féin that a republican cease-fire could bring substantial political rewards. Sinn Féin took that message to the IRA, which responded with a "complete cessation of military operations" on August 31, 1994.

The unilateral cease-fire appeared to mark an historic compromise. The IRA attached no conditions to the cease-fire. The British had not agreed to a timetable for withdrawal, nor had they agreed to persuade Unionists to accept the incorporation of the North into the Irish Republic. Republican leaders had accepted something that fell short of their movement's long-stated goals, with a belief that a favorable interim settlement could be reached.

The IRA's move was predicated on a belief that the British were committed to reaching a long-term settlement in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin had sold the cease-fire to IRA leaders with the understanding that, after a three-month period, Sinn Féin would be included in all-party negotiations over the political future of Northern Ireland.

Sinn Féin leaders called on the British government to respond "generously and imaginatively" to the cease-fire. Instead, the British response to the cease-fire proved dilatory and evasive at best—provocative and triumphalist at worst. For six weeks after the IRA's cease-fire announcement, Britain insisted that it declare the cessation "permanent," immediately souring the republican mood. Though the British eventually suspended street patrols in Northern Ireland, there was precious little movement on other fronts. Britain failed to underpin the peace process by refusing to grant concessions on a range of issues, including the early release of political prisoners and the reform of the largely Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary. Then, in the spring of 1995, the British insisted that the IRA decommission some of its weapons before Sinn Féin be allowed into all-party talks—a precondition the IRA regarded as tantamount to a call for surrender. Sinn Féin insisted that decommissioning simply wasn't feasible, and would come at the end of negotiations. Sinn Féin leaders insisted that they had no room for maneuver on this issue, and would not have agreed to a cease-fire had that been a precondition.

This past November, a potential way out of the decommissioning stalemate appeared when the British and Irish governments released a joint communiqué establishing a twin-track diplomatic process. The communiqué

announced the establishment of an international arms commission—headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell—to offer recommendations about weapons disposal. At the same time, the process included preliminary talks that were to pave the way for all-party talks scheduled to begin by late February. On January 24, the Mitchell commission released its recommendations, saying that it was unrealistic to expect any decommissioning of arms before all-party talks. The commission said talks about weapons disposal should proceed alongside inclusive talks on Northern Ireland's political future.

But British Prime Minister John Major brushed aside the Mitchell commission's recommendations and, without consulting the Irish government, called for elections to be held in Northern Ireland from which negotiators would be chosen for the all-party discussions. And so, as a result of Major's proposal, all-party talks that were expected to begin by late February, were postponed indefinitely. This was widely perceived as blatant pandering to Unionists.

"Major panicked when he sensed he'd lost the last subterfuge to delay all-party talks," said Mitchell McLaughlin, Sinn Fein's national party chairman and principal architect of the republican peace strategy. Even Major's allies believe the prime minister made some serious mistakes. "We should not have made prior decommissioning of weapons such a bald precondition," a pro-Unionist Conservative told the *Financial Times* soon after the Canary Wharf bombing. "We're not talking about

appeasement, but we gained little by boxing Adams so firmly into a corner."

Soon after the Canary Wharf bombing, one IRA source told the *Irish Times* that Major's elected assembly proposal was "the last straw," the factor that led directly to the repudiation of the cease-fire.

What led Major to overplay his hand in the peace process? Given his razor-thin parliamentary majority, he needed to maintain the support of pro-Unionist Tory backbenchers as well as nine Ulster Unionist MPs whose loyalty he would need in the event of a no-confidence vote; he also relied on overly optimistic intelligence reports that suggested the cease-fire would hold indefinitely.

While Major bears considerable responsibility for the failure of the peace process, hard questions must also be put to the IRA. What is the IRA hoping to accomplish by resuming the military campaign? It has undermined the credibility of Sinn Fein's leadership and badly strained republican ties to the SDLP, Southern politicians and the Clinton administration.

"I now see it as my job to persuade the IRA to announce another cease-fire," McLaughlin said. "But I'm hamstrung by the failure of politics over the past 18 months, and the failure of politics over the last 70 years. At this stage, I have few arguments to offer to those who have always been mistrustful of politics." ◀

Colin McArthur is the pen name of a Chicago-based writer.

The first publication from New Art Examiner Press

The Artist in Society: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities

A collaboration between the New Art Examiner and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, this publication gathers together, in book form, selected papers from "The Artist in Society: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities," an October 1994 conference organized by the museum and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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U R B A N P O L I T I C S

Car talk

***Baltimore
community
groups fight to
break auto
insurers'
stranglehold on
inner cities.***

By Deirdre Shesgreen

In the late 1980s, the Greater Baltimore Rainbow Coalition was in a slump. Members of the coalition, a local offshoot of Jesse Jackson's national group, felt they were spending too much time preaching to the converted. But rather than operate on the political margins, they wanted to make progressive ideas concrete to the mainstream. "We were looking for a bread-and-butter issue," says A. Robert Kaufman, a Rainbow Coalition member.

Without too much effort, they found one: auto insurance. It may not sound like a sexy, hot-button issue, but for the Rainbow Coalition, it proved a perfect match. With the insurance issue, Kaufman and other coalition members were able to tap into deep frustrations of Baltimoreans who felt they were being gouged by insurance companies.

There's no doubt that urban dwellers—in Baltimore and across the coun-

try—pay exorbitant rates to insure their cars. Because insurance companies set rates according to a driver's place of residence, and not only by an individual's driving records, poor inner-city residents, and African-Americans in particular, end up paying two to four times more for auto insurance than their suburban and rural counterparts.

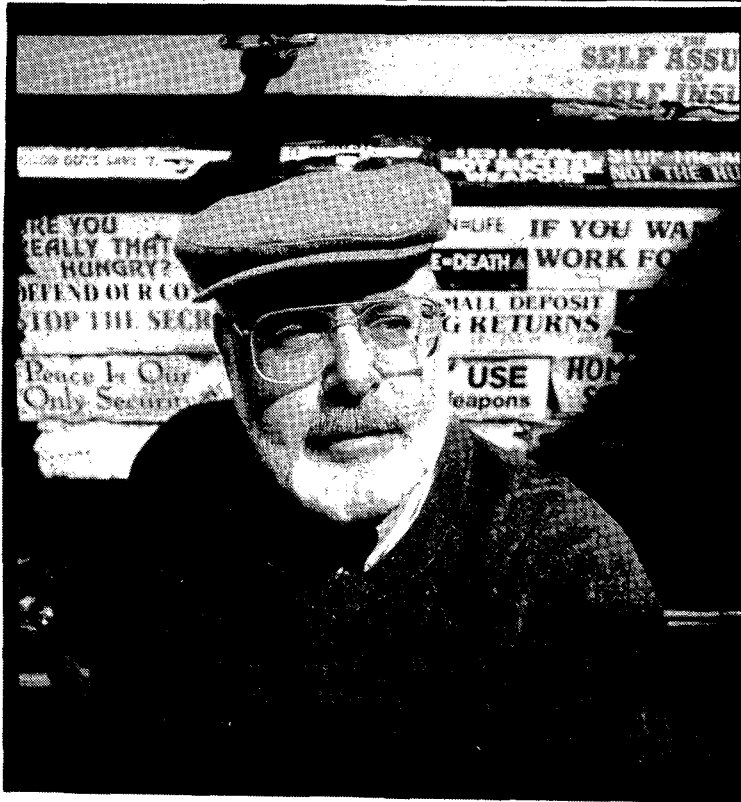
To fight the insurance company's discriminatory tactics, Kaufman and others formed a new group, the City-Wide Insurance Coalition (CWIC—pronounced "quick"), in November 1989. Their initial research showed that legislative and legal efforts to reform existing insurance companies had failed, so they decided to take an entirely different tack: They would form a nonprofit cooperative, controlled by policyholders, and sell auto insurance at cost.

CWIC's idea gained immediate popularity, with community groups, activists and politicians all offering support. Kaufman, a legendary, though controversial, figure in Baltimore politics, insists that CWIC's plan has national significance. "If we can make it work here," Kaufman argues, "it can work anywhere." But six years after CWIC's founding, the nonprofit company has yet to materialize. Ask three different people why such a popular idea has made so little progress and you'll get three different answers. Some say Kaufman's confrontational style has killed it. Others say the idea just won't work: It is much more complicated—and more expensive—than it first appeared. Still others, namely Kaufman, say politicians are too beholden to the status quo—and to insurance industry money—to embrace such a novel idea. "What we're doing is in the interest of everybody, except the insurance industry, which funds [the politicians'] campaign coffers," Kaufman says.

There's probably a little truth in each of those explanations, but to get the full answer, one has to look at the whole story—how CWIC got started and what, if anything, will come of its six-year battle to change the rules of the insurance game.

CWIC's beginnings were humble. To get the organization off the ground, members held a flea market, which brought in about \$2,000—enough to do a mass mailing to local community associations, unions and local activist groups. Before long, CWIC had more than 180 organizations in its coalition—from small neighborhood associations to the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (a powerful Baltimore-area church association) to the Baltimore Homeless Union. And perhaps more importantly, they had early support from local politicians, including members of the City Council and Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke.

The group's broad base of support was rooted in stories like that of Baltimore resident Bill Henry. In 1990, Henry bought a car for \$2,000. His car payments were \$75 a



CWIC's A. Robert Kaufman

month, but because of where he lived, he says, his car insurance was \$250 a month. "My insurance was three times my car payment and \$50 more than my rent," Henry says. If he had moved over the city line, Henry argues, his monthly bill would have dropped significantly. City Council Member Melvin Stukes says high auto insurance rates are a key factor driving middle-class homeowners to the suburbs.

Stories like Henry's are hardly unique to Baltimore, and the practice is hardly new. Insurers, banks and other institutions have a long history of denying mortgages, home insurance policies and other financial opportunities to poor people. In recent years, state and national lawmakers have passed legislation—most notably, the federal Community Reinvestment Act—outlawing many of these practices. But study after study shows that insurers still discriminate against the urban poor and especially against African-Americans.

For example, a survey of Allstate Insurance Co. rates done by the Baltimore citizens group Fair Auto Insurance Rates Inc. (FAIR) found that city residents living in areas with high minority populations paid far more for their coverage than did residents in areas with low minority populations. In a northwestern section of the city with a 21 percent minority population, Allstate's annual rate was \$655.80, according to FAIR. In an another section with an 88 percent minority population, the company's rate was \$997.60. "The blacker the zip code, the higher the rates," Stukes notes.

But such evidence has done little to change insurance company practices. The reason, say critics, is the industry's enormous size and influence. In the June 1995 issue of *Best's*

Review, an industry trade magazine, former Ohio Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, who now chairs the Consumer Federation of America, summed up the situation this way: "The insurance industry is the most powerful economic factor in America and the least regulated; the insurance regulators in this country are an embarrassment."

In Maryland alone, the auto insurance industry brings in more than \$2.4 billion a year in direct written premiums. And a glance at the assets of insurance companies are enough to make one's eyes bulge. The ITT Hartford Group, Inc. one of the oldest multi-line insurance companies, had more than \$82 billion in assets as of March 1995, according to *Best's Review*.

Of course, the companies don't save all this money for themselves—they also give generously to politicians who shape the legislative landscape. In Maryland, for example, insurance PACs gave more than \$150,000 to state lawmakers in the 1994 election cycle. Individual insurance companies also got into the game. Geico Insurance Co., for example, gave between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to all but two gubernatorial candidates—including both Democrats and Republicans—in Maryland's 1994 race.

But rather than being daunted by the industry's power, Kaufman originally saw it as CWIC's inspiration. By launching a grass-roots effort to create an entirely new company, he felt CWIC wouldn't have to push its plan through the state's legislative or legal system—leaving fewer avenues for the insurance industry to block their efforts. It seemed an ideal approach to the 64-year-old Kaufman, who has spent much of his life battling the powers that be. Last summer, he made an unsuccessful bid for city council, and his much-touted campaign motto was "to activate, organize, unite in order to empower the 90 percent who own less wealth than the 1 percent at the top." But Kaufman's strong rhetoric and never-ending political aspirations (he is now running for the congressional seat being vacated by newly named NAACP President Kweisi Mfume) make many Baltimoreans dismiss him as an ineffective gadfly. Kaufman himself acknowledges that he has "an obnoxious personality," but he says, and not without justification, that his relentless drive is a key reason CWIC made any headway.

In 1990, Kaufman and CWIC pressured Mayor Schموke to fund a feasibility study of their nonprofit corporation model. Schموke agreed to fund half of the \$52,000 study, and CWIC managed to scrounge up almost all the rest from individuals, neighborhood associations and other organizations. Leslie Ransom, a business consultant who conducted the study, kicked in the difference.

Ransom completed the study in August 1991 and concluded, not surprisingly, that a nonprofit could bring substantial savings to city drivers. "The numbers that actually came out were scary because the savings was so large,"

PHOTO COURTESY OF A. ROBERT KAUFMAN

Ransom says. In a very conservative estimate, Ransom predicted that their nonprofit corporation could save 20 percent for drivers in the first two years, and that amount would increase in the third year of operation.

But not all the news in Ransom's study was good. He also estimated that setting up a nonprofit insurance company would take an initial investment of between \$9 million and \$25 million. That price tag has been the biggest stumbling block in CWIC's fight. Although organizers pushed ahead with the next phase of the project—a research and development study—the coalition had already started to dissolve. Part of the problem was that Kaufman demanded that the city pay for the entire R&D study. Schmoke balked, and Kaufman's hard line—and confrontational style—led to infighting and defection. Kaufman showed up at various public events wearing a plastic Pinocchio nose and charged that Schmoke was lying to the public about CWIC. During one outburst at a city council meeting, the city council president gavelled Kaufman down and had him removed from the room.

The combination of the nonprofit's hefty price tag and Kaufman's antics was enough to make politicians distance themselves from the proposal and, more specifically, from Kaufman. Although Schmoke did eventually chip in city money for the R&D study, his relationship with Kaufman deteriorated, and the mayor made it clear that the city had no interest in a proposal that would cost as much as \$25 million. (The mayor's office now claims that the true cost would be even higher—as much as \$40 million.)

Kaufman insists that the nonprofit corporation model is not dead, but it's unclear how it can succeed in Baltimore now that he has lost the support of the city council and the mayor—the only people with the money and power necessary to make it happen. But even if CWIC's nonprofit never gets off the ground, the group has already succeeded in initiating a statewide debate over the insurance industry.

Although Schmoke has abandoned the nonprofit idea, he has been pressing Maryland's lawmakers to deal with the inequities uncovered by CWIC. In 1992, Schmoke commissioned Ransom to do yet another study—this time on disparities in auto insurance rates in Baltimore neighborhoods. In his research, Ransom found that “residents in some geographical areas are effectively eliminated [from the auto insurance market] through the use of certain ‘legal’ underwriting and market practices.” To avoid selling policies to inner-city residents, insurers simply don't open offices in the inner city. For example, at the time of Ransom's survey, Nationwide Insurance Co. had 41 agencies in the Baltimore metro area, but only four in the city itself. Allstate had 85 offices in the area, but only one of those was located in the city. Ransom also found that companies don't send direct mail or make telemarketing calls in certain neighborhoods.

Schmoke used the study as a tool to persuade state politicians to take action. Maryland's Democratic Governor, Parris Glendening, agreed that the issue needed to be addressed,

and he set up a task force last February to study the issue. From the start, however, the task force seemed unlikely to recommend serious reform. For one thing, no CWIC members were asked to join the task force, ensuring that their ideas would be kept at a distance.

But Glendening did introduce a bill, which passed last year, requiring insurers to show state regulators that they are aggressively marketing in the city. (The original version required insurers to meet certain quotas, but that was watered down to placate insurance companies and their lobbyists.) The mayor's office concedes that these efforts are not the ultimate answer, but says it's a good start. “We're seeing some small improvements,” says Richard Krummerich, a special assistant to the mayor who has worked on the insurance issue. “The insurance companies are getting nervous.” But Krummerich adds, “The situation is still not good. The gap [between urban rates and suburban and rural rates] is still too wide.”

This session, the governor is pushing another insurance reform bill. But the measure, instead of attacking corporate malfeasance, targets fraudulent claimants and limits legal awards to accident victims and their lawyers. The measure completely fails to address the basic issue that Kaufman and CWIC attacked: territorial rating. Although Kaufman is frustrated, he is the first to say that his six-year battle hasn't been for naught. The state reform measures may be far from his original vision, but the threat of new state laws has prompted insurers to work with CWIC to find some middle ground at the local level. “It created an impetus for the industry to become more aggressive in urban areas,” says Ransom, who isn't a CWIC member but has been serving as negotiator between the group and various insurance companies. “They'd much rather do it on their own instead of being regulated. So we became a very good avenue.”

Ransom says he is talking with two insurance companies that are considering offering discounts to members of the city's various neighborhood associations. Ransom says they hope to strike a deal within the next two months. He believes such a deal could save money for 10 to 12 percent of city drivers. Ransom is frustrated that 88 percent of the city will be excluded, but he looks at the plan as “a catalyst for change.”

Kaufman, too, sees the proposal as a good first step. But he plans to keep pushing the reform effort further. He wants Baltimore officials to put the nonprofit corporation concept before city voters, letting them decide whether to fund the proposal. The mayor's office says this won't happen, but Kaufman is not discouraged. As Baltimoreans have learned in the last six years, small steps are not his style. Where others see potential for polite reform, Kaufman sees the potential for radical change. And where others see the chance to take a few bucks back from insurance companies, he still sees an opportunity to change the relationship between poor urban dwellers and America's largest corporations. ◀

Deirdre Shesgreen is a staff writer for the *Baltimore City Paper*.

I N T H E A R T S

A gay old time

The Celluloid Closet
tours the history of homosexuality on screen.

By Pat Dowell

The earliest gay image in *The Celluloid Closet* is from 1895: An experimental film from Thomas Edison shows two men dancing together in his laboratory. Okay, so we can't be certain this is a shot of two gay men—but that is more or less the point of this astute and eye-catching documentary. For much of its century-long history, the American film industry has been, at best, coy and condescending about homosexuality. At its worst, Hollywood has meted out symbolic death and, perhaps worse, invisibility to a group that played a significant role in creating the industry. For many decades gays looked for themselves on the screen in only the most ambiguous and often disguised characters, such as those played by Sal Mineo in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and Robert Walker in *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

The Celluloid Closet offers up a chronological series of film clips disclosing the vast multitude of these disguises. It also features remarkably sharp commentary from an illustrious group that includes not only such household names as Tom Hanks, Susan Sarandon and Gore Vidal, but also such lesser-known but important contributors as filmmaker Jan Oxenberg and British critic Richard Dyer. Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, who made the Oscar-winning documentary *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (1989), jointly directed and produced the film, while novelist Armistead Maupin (also featured as an interview subject) wrote the narration.

And what stuff these filmmakers have gotten from their "cast." Tony Curtis demonstrates his Josephine pout from *Some Like It Hot* (1959) and talks about how movie stars shaped his own childhood ideas about romance. Vidal levels Hollywood's first resident censor Will Hays with a few acidly delivered comments and recalls the famous story of how he inserted gay subtexts into the screenplay of the Charlton Heston version of *Ben-Hur* (1959). Shirley MacLaine laments the guilt-ridden depiction of lesbianism in *The Children's Hour* (1962), which nevertheless achieved landmark status for being the first film treatment of the story not to erase lesbianism from the plot altogether.

The clip montages are just as well-chosen as the interview excerpts. And this is one technique in which the film can do something that its inspiration, the late Vito Russo's book of the same title, which was first published in 1981 and updated in 1987, could not. The film splices together medleys of the epithet "fag" as used from the permissive '60s onward, and of gay characters dying violently, their obligatory fate in movie after movie during the transitional years after World War II when movies could hint at their "perversion," only to punish it promptly. Both of these sequences profit immeasurably from Epstein and Friedman's rat-a-tat style of presentation.

Like Russo's book, the movie traces the history of the screen's gay stereotypes—such as the openly gay sissy—before the Hays Production Code went into effect in 1934. It also sketches portraits of the erotically androgynous stars of that



The Celluloid Closet
 Directed by
 Jeffrey Friedman and
 Rob Epstein

THE CELLULOID CLOSET



era, like Marlene Dietrich, who appeared frequently in drag in her early films. Everyone loved women dressed up like men, Quentin Crisp says, while men in dresses draw scornful reactions. "There's no sin like being a woman," Crisp observes.

The film takes the story through the various disguises of gay characters—prison matrons played by the formidable Hope Emerson, cowboy pinups Montgomery Clift and John Ireland adoringly comparing guns in *Red River* (1948), the comedies in which Rock Hudson would pursue nervous virgin Doris Day (which screenwriter Jay Presson Allen says were called "d.f. movies" for "delayed fuck"). Gay themes began to receive more open treatment when the Production Code ended in the 1960s—and when (the filmmakers should say but don't) the tradition-minded studios lost their iron grip on actors and directors, who began to produce films independently of the old contract system.

Still, the overthrow of the Production Code did not extend in most Hollywood movies to overt displays of homosexuality and, once it did, it brought on a simultaneous backlash of anti-gay exploitation, a development that *The Celluloid Closet* could delineate a little more clearly than it does. Think of *Cruising* (1980), which gets graphic screentime here—together with *Philadelphia* screenwriter Ron Nyswaner's reminiscence of how it figured into his first experience at the hands of gay bashers in the 1980s. They told him, "If you saw the movie *Cruising*, you know what you deserve." Nyswaner's tale also provides a succinct explanation of why it is important to analyze and, above all, to change the images of marginalized people and experience

at the multiplex.

The filmmakers end their historical survey on a rather false note of optimism, with Maupin's script for narrator Lily Tomlin declaring, "The long silence is finally ending." Under this triumphant pronouncement run images from the new films of the last decade that have been made by and about gays: *Longtime Companion*, for instance, and *Go Fish*. Like these two, virtually all of the examples are not Hollywood productions at all, but the work of cash-strapped independents who can barely find a dozen theaters in which to show their films.

Hollywood still lags, as even a celebrated breakthrough like *Philadelphia*

illustrates; the filmmakers neglect to mention that the movie's stars, Tom Hanks and Antonio Banderas never even share a kiss. Hanks, in his interview in *The Celluloid Closet*, says he thinks he was cast to make his gay character appear "unthreatening." And the latest in Hollywood gay fashion is to remake a 20-year-old French farce, *La Cage aux Folles*. The new version, with Robin Williams and Nathan Lane as the gay couple trying to hide their true nature from their son's prospective in-laws, will be in about 2,000 more theaters than *The Celluloid Closet*, when both open this month.

To their credit, the filmmakers also include in this last little march of progress some of the more typical and more disturbing gay (or presumed gay) images ending the silence: *Basic Instinct* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. But they don't show the offscreen attacks on gays by conservative Christians that will probably increase exponentially as we near this year's presidential election.

Like the film's perfunctory acknowledgment of Stonewall and the movement that it started, this omission emphasizes the depoliticized nature of *The Celluloid Closet*. It's an educational tool that clearly seeks an audience beyond those already acquainted with the facts, and hence it seeks to avoid the risk of turning them off with militancy. In these polarized times, I doubt that such a mission has a chance unless it plainly and forthrightly includes the politics outside the theater that can so often shape the images that appear inside it. All the same, whatever *The Celluloid Closet* is not, it is an elegant and wise lesson in the history of the movies, and a story that only a movie could tell so well.

IN PRINT

Night of the living progressives

By Wilson Carey McWilliams

EJ. Dionne Jr., of the *Washington Post*, is that rarest of political commentators, a journalist who combines scholarship and a feeling for politics with an unwillingness to fool himself or his readers. So there must have been times, writing *They Only Look Dead*, when he worried that he was engaging in wishful thinking. Dionne's thesis, that America is on the edge of a new era of progressive politics, ran most emphatically against the conventional wisdom that then seemed to reign everywhere. In Congress, Newt Gingrich and his Net surfers were confident they were riding the wave of the future, while the president was reduced to plaintive denials of his own irrelevance. Today, though, Dionne is beginning to look like a seer: The president and his party are feeling perky—even talking of a possible Democratic recapture of the House of Representatives this November—while even Bob Dole has been heard to denounce corporate greed in a raspy imitation of Pat Buchanan's "conservatism of the heart."

As Dionne recognized, the leading spirits among the Republicans misread the results in 1994 as a vote against government and have pressed ahead with an agenda that, in principle, points back to social Darwinism. The strong ideological cast of the Republican majority in Congress will force a corresponding intellectual and political discipline in the house of liberalism, Dionne argues: Democrats and progressives will articulate their own first principles, especially as they come to realize they hold a winning hand. The American electorate—or at least that crucial sector Dionne calls the "anxious middle"—is angry at government for its failures, but it wants a government that effectively addresses problems like job security, economic fairness and civil order. In 1994, such voters turned against the Democrats because of

the party's failure to deliver: Part rebuke, the vote bespoke a widespread desire for a government that would "do something." But middle-sector voters, as Republicans have been learning, were not about to abandon their social protections.

Dionne's analogy between our times and the turn-of-the-century era of Progressivism is persuasive, after all, because the middle sectors of society feel as embattled today as they did then. New technologies and the global economy threaten old securities; jobs are going overseas; downsizing is a way of life. Combined with older ills like income inequality and racial strife, these forces compose what many Progressive-era reformers would recognize as a familiar picture: Some advance, many suffer, and it isn't hard to see a two-class society in the making. In recent decades white, middle-sector voters have tended to side with conservatives and with the economic elite, drawn by the lure of opportunity and their distaste for the underclass. Yet, as Dionne observes, the old conservative assurance that the market will make everything right in the long term is ringing hollow, because for too many people in that "anxious middle," things are certainly not better, and may be getting worse.

That discernment threatens the Republican coalition in another way. As Dionne shows, conservative strategists have so far been able to hold their coalition together by persuading social conservatives to be satisfied with symbolic gains, leaving the more-or-less libertarian wing the winner when it comes to policy. This artistry turns on the doctrine, associated with William Kristol, that shrinking government will almost certainly revive the institutions of "civil society"—America's families, churches, associations and local communities—which will rebuild moral order without the state. In fact, technology and the new economy are shattering communities and undermining old values: It is becoming harder to conceal the fact that capitalism, left to its own devices, is a school of relativism and social fragmentation. Newt Gingrich is babblingly lyrical about technology and the future, but, Dionne notes, he shows little concern for traditional values and so far, he seems to regard America's growing inequality as only a way-station on the road to Oz. Small wonder, then, that religious and social conservatives are restive, many drawn to Pat Buchanan's protectionism, but others—especially Catholics—uneasy with the Republican enterprise itself.

A good part of *They Only Look Dead*, however, reminds us how easily, and how recently, Democrats have blown political opportu-

THEY ONLY LOOK DEAD



WHY PROGRESSIVES WILL DOMINATE
* * THE NEXT POLITICAL ERA * *

E. J. DIONNE JR.

AUTHOR OF WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS

They Only Look Dead

By E.J. Dionne Jr.
Simon and Schuster
336 pp., \$24



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nities. Dionne downplays Clinton's failures during his first years in office, especially because the need to make some dent in the deficit limited the president's room to maneuver; he prefers to direct his criticism at the then-Democratic majorities in Congress, especially in the House.

Convinced that incumbency and the PAC money that accompanies it made them virtually invulnerable and independent of the president's fortunes, Democrats had only a shadow of discipline. They tended to resist any change in the status quo—most obviously, any campaign reform that limited the financial advantage of incumbents, a policy that proved ruinous for Democrats once the party lost its majorities. In that sense, Gingrich was right to call the Democrats "reactionary."

For Dionne, the partisan victory Gingrich engineered in 1994 is a potentially creative discomfort that may force Democrats to a new affirmation. I certainly hope so. But Dionne may be understating the Democratic dilemma. Dionne contends that Democrats need to move away from social liberalism, with its emphasis on the rights of disadvantaged constituencies, toward policies, like health care, that benefit all Americans. Dionne prefers the term "pro-

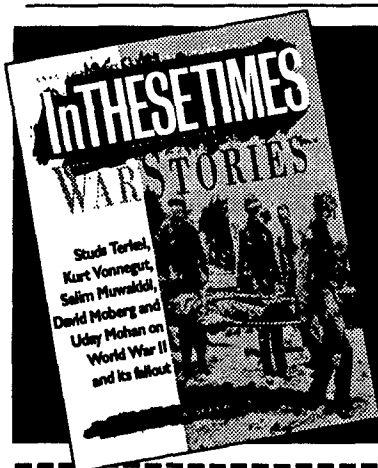
gressive," I think, because he finds it relatively free from liberalism's association of rights with immunities from politics and more open to the idea of rights secured in and through politics. But liberalism isn't so easily abandoned. Clinton made more than a little gesture toward softening liberal dogma in 1992 only to focus, in the early days of his administration, on a social liberal agenda—seeking to rescind the ban on gays in the military, of course, but also the succession of bungled efforts to find an attorney general that grew out of, and highlighted, Clinton's insistence that the nominee be a woman. A political imperative is involved: With the increasing importance of money in campaigns, Democrats are dependent on liberal donors for whom group's rights matter more than civic equality. Thus, Dionne's hope for a more democratic politics depends on a more democratic politics: At bottom, Dionne's teaching is a moral vision.

That helps to explain Dionne's chapter on the media, a fine essay that otherwise seems out of place in his argument. The media are the de facto intermediary between citizens and government, vital to any hope for a better politics. But as Dionne shows, the Lippmanesque ideal of press "objectivity," always something of a fake, is rapidly disappearing in favor of a stance that is partly adversarial and partly disposed to legitimate any "perspective" without regard for its truth. Dionne urges a "journalism of controversy" concerned to foster democratic debate in the high sense, deliberation "in search of truth," but that's a tall order: It asks not only for media that resist the imperative to entertain, but for journalists wise enough to disregard the dogmas that dominate intellectual life.

Similarly, Dionne argues in support of the global economy, but only on condition that our trading partners respect minimal human rights, a policy Clinton scrapped in favor of economic gain. And when Dionne tells us that America must come to terms with the deficit in a way that preserves government's "capacity to invest," his stance points to higher—if more equitably distributed—taxes. On both points, Dionne is presuming that Americans know or can be persuaded that the most important things should not be for sale. That citizen's creed is desperately fragile in contemporary America, and the central tenet of Dionne's Progressivism is the need for government to respect and help rebuild the civil society that nurtures it.

But these dilemmas neither discredit the brunt of Dionne's analysis nor temper his plea for progressive renewal. In *They Only Look Dead*, Dionne has outlined for Americans a democratic evangel, a political program that, obstacles and all, points us in the only direction worth taking. ◀

Wilson Carey McWilliams is a professor of political science at Rutgers University and the author most recently of *The Politics of Disappointment: American Elections, 1976-94* (Chatham House).



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Editorial

Continued from page 2

ings fall by 18 percent between 1973 and 1995, while the real annual pay of corporate CEOs has increased 66 percent after taxes. And it's heresy to let on that even as productivity has risen 10.3 percent during the 1991-1995 recovery, the real hourly wages of workers have remained flat.

As readers of *In These Times* know, these are the things that socialists talk about, not Republicans, or even most Democrats. So it is not surprising that a flood of condemnation has poured forth on Buchanan from the defenders of the faith. Conservative Republicans like Wyoming Sen. Malcolm Wallop are now resorting to the "S" word to discredit Buchanan. John Sununu, the co-host of CNN's *Crossfire*, has joined the attack. The *Wall Street Journal* froths at the mouth about apostasy in the higher Republican echelons. And one *Chicago Tribune* writer compares Buchanan to Jesse Jackson and approvingly quotes a political science professor's judgment that both are merely "tent-show revivalists" who "use words to inflame, not to enlighten"—presumably unlike their rivals who enlighten us daily. Nor is it only conservatives who like to belittle Pat. He just can't get no respect, not even from a Democrat like Hendrik Hertzberg, who in *The New Yorker* patronizingly dismisses Buchanan voters as "mostly blue-collar xenophobes."

But the truth is that Buchanan is speaking to the all-too-real pain of most Americans. As the *New York Times*' Bob Herbert writes, the Republican Party's problem is the "cosmic disconnect between what the voters want and what the party of corporate interests can give them." This, of course, is true also of Buchanan. Even so, he has the intelligence and courage to address meaningful public policy questions, albeit mixed with his neanderthal views on social issues. And within the confines of the Republican Party, this gives Buchanan a resonance with the faithful that goes well beyond his base in the Christian Coalition. Of course, unless the Republicans are inclined toward suicide, Buchanan will not get the nomination. Yet we all owe him a debt of gratitude for demonstrating that despite all the efforts of politicians and the corporate media to keep the genie in the bottle, working people are well aware of the source of their discontent.

Above all, this should be a lesson for the left. Buchanan has taken our issue and run with it. We can expect that Clinton will have to follow suit, no matter how vaguely and hesitantly. But this is an opportunity for labor to enter the fray forcefully, and for Democratic congressional candidates running against the 1994 crop of conservative Republicans to go beyond Buchanan's rhetoric and educate the public on the real problems facing our economy. Buchanan won in New Hampshire by throwing over the economic conservatism of the GOP. Now Democrats should abandon it as well. ◀

Next issue: Real solutions to the issues Buchanan raises.

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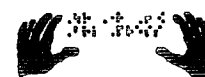
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Continued from page 40

taken a firm stand against the anything-to-win bunker ethos of the Stanton campaign, it hardly matters: Stanton's nomination is by then a fait accompli.

As for the candidate, he periodically displays a passing interest in the content of politics: the minutiae of policy debates, the odd Head Start program. But these erratic flourishes come across as merely personal quirks, much like his philandering and his prodigious appetite.

What really drives Stanton—apart, of course, from the ambition to be president—is sentiment, in the most pejorative sense of the word. He gets all misty-eyed mid-handshake; he wins intimacies from remote and casual acquaintances. He hugs cripples and large black women. In place of any serious clash of ideas, character or conscience, *Primary Colors* only supplies the drama of a campaign staff struggling to keep the excesses of this weepy, neoliberal Falstaff in tow.

This, of course, might be an entirely plausible portrait of Bill Clinton or any number of other politicians. But that's not really the point: However goofily off-base Clinton's character—his weeping, hugging or eating habits—may be, he did win election on an identifiable set of policies and (yes) principles. Of course, he betrayed many of them in office. But they, or anything like them, are almost nowhere to be found in *Primary Colors*. And to divorce Clinton—or, Stanton—from politics as such is to misread something about his character apparent to anyone who listens to him for more than 10 seconds.

This, Lord knows, is not to offer a defense of Clinton or Clintonism, but to point out the broader canvas of character and real historical change almost entirely missing from *Primary Colors*. Consider the one candidate the book actually admires—an entirely fictional Florida governor named Freddy Picker, who steps into the fray after another contender (clearly based on Paul Tsongas) has a heart attack. Picker crafts his candidacy around numbingly banal nostrums that would probably embarrass Steven Spielberg. Pressed to supply details of his platform on *Larry King Live*, for example, Picker offers this blurry, homespun response: "Everybody knows we got to do *something*. ... But it'd be sort of foolish for me to stand up now, in the middle of a campaign, and say just exactly what it is we're gonna do, Larry. ... [W]e've got to wait until this country elects a president and he sits down with the folks in Congress and works out the precise details." This pronouncement—which turns upside down the whole ostensible purpose of a campaign—is, we are supposed to believe, straight talk, and possibly even integrity.

Nor do the book's credulity-defying flourishes end there. When candidate Picker volunteers to give blood to his fallen predecessor in the race, for example, everyone is smitten by this crassly symbolic ploy. Crowds wave placards in which the "i" in Picker appears as a drop of blood, while the Stanton camp of advisers marvels witlessly at the "brilliant" politics of the gesture. The price of banishing ideas or critical thinking from the political process is, it seems, steep indeed.

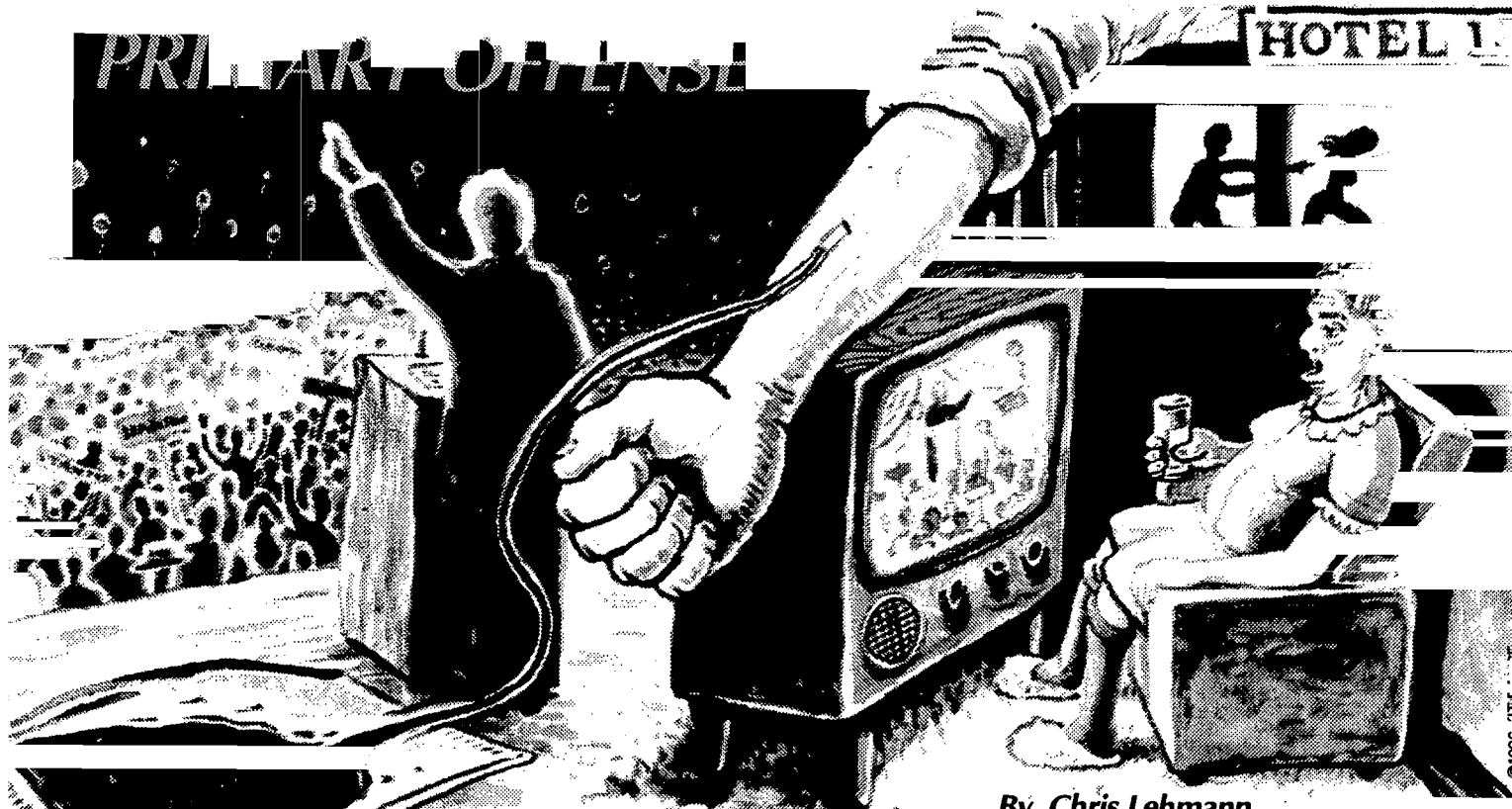
It's clear that *Primary Colors* is another stylish effusion of what *George* magazine is pleased to call our "post-partisan"

age. But even that is not the worst of its sins. At every opportunity, the book describes the lives, speech and domestic settings of ordinary Americans in the most condescending terms imaginable. There's a crippled, stuttering and dimly lit Dunkin' Donuts worker who is the unofficial mascot of the Stanton campaign in New Hampshire; there's a "big blowsy woman in curlers" at one Stanton rally who announces she'd rather watch soap operas than work for a living; there's a retiree at a Jewish senior center "with orange hair and absurd breasts that spilled from a peasant blouse" who visits a leering hug on the candidate.

And the professional pol's reaction to all this vulgarity? Here is the candidate's wife, Susan Stanton, responding to a suggestion from the dull-witted donut tender: "Susan inhaled sharply and hugged Danny, burying his head in her neck. 'No. You're right, Danny,' she said, pulling back, putting her hand, full, flat on his cheek. 'You're right, honey. We can't play rope-a-dope now.'"

The sharp intake of breath, the controlling, matronly hand on the cheek: We're clearly meant to understand these disagreeable displays as the price of life in the arena, the touch of disciplinary noblesse oblige the ritual of democracy exacts from our rulers. Various characters in the book pay lip service periodically to "the folks" and the notion of "doing it for *them*." But there's never any question that the pols would sink to *their* level; the book's fastidious rendering of Henry's taste preferences bears subtle but unmistakable witness to that point. Henry favors the "early Doris Lessing," the detached and "pristine" fiction of Alice Munro and virtually any kind of foreign film. Culture for Henry is the great decontaminant, a way to hose down the soul after too much milling among the swinish multitudes. The quiet class contempt of *Primary Colors* is worthy of a George Bush or a Leona Helmsley, and the upshot of it is clearly the nastiest turn in this relentlessly nasty novel: Even if American politics is now the quarry of soulless, technocratic hacks and spinmasters, we are meant to conclude, that's better than handing the works over to those tasteless yokels, the masses.

Such, too, is the faintly discernible logic of the novel's resolution, which is ambiguously cast as a happy ending. Henry had been astonished to find, as the Stanton campaign swung into his hometown of New York City, that he could no longer bear to inhabit his long-neglected apartment on the Upper West Side. He'd grown used to the antiseptic comfort of hotels—he's not just a culture freak, but a neat freak as well. One might expect, then, that Henry's abandonment of the Stanton campaign might be accompanied by a homecoming. He might quietly take up his old life, relishing the modest "civilian" pleasures of post-campaign living among the unfamous and comparatively powerless. Instead, he plans to embark with his love interest to a remote tropical beach resort, to occupy yet another hotel. The campaign is over; long live the campaign. That, in a sense, is all you need to know about the social world of *Primary Colors*—and about the unnamed, inexplicably bitter, tribune of the governing class who wrote it.



By Chris Lehmann

is tempted to respond to the subtitle of *Primary Colors*—"a novel of politics"—by insisting that it, a la the Moral Majority, is neither. It's not especially a novel, in that it's based so transparently on Bill Clinton's march to the Democratic nomination in 1992. And it's not especially about politics, in that it engages no issues of any greater moment than the situational ethics of spin control and hazards no judgment on our public life that is anything but glib and provisional.

It is, however, significant, and not just for the well-flogged question of who wrote it. The only reason to care about the author's identity is simply to learn what quarter of our national life—the press, the campaign-management sector, the White House nomenclatura—is so rankly permeated with the facile cynicism that the book's author has successfully marketed as searing political insight. *Primary Colors*, clearly intended to inspire some sort of ill-defined moral out-

rage in its readers, is so clumsily drawn and portentously executed that it creates a quite unintended, but not unsalutary, revulsion for punditry of all kinds.

Indeed, the thumbprints of pundit sensibility are all over the novel, from the design of its plot to the hygienic invective of its prose style and dialogue. Half of its characters are hastily sketched caricatures of famous politicians, often graced with leadenly mnemonic names for readers who may not be quick on the uptake. (Orlando Ozio, for instance, is the overtly high-minded, but secretly vindictive, Hamlet-like governor of New York. Get it?) The other half are the sort of broad lifestyle stereotypes (the cloyingly liberal widow of a union activist, the enormous, avenging lesbian, and most sweepingly and tellingly, the the touching-but-dumb hoi polloi, aka "the folks") that suggest the author, whoever he or she may be, has

spent far too much time viewing humanity as focus groups.

The plot is, of course, tiresomely familiar: The obscure governor of a Southern state (Jack Stanton, for those keeping score), an ideological floating signifier but an incurable policy wonk, struggles in the face of adversity—usually in the form of press-fueled scandals—to capture his party's nomination. While the scandals are blown out of proportion, the governor is usually guilty as charged—and capable of much worse.

There are subplots, too, and the one we're supposed to care about is the narrator's struggle to regain some purchase on something resembling idealism. Here *Primary Colors* superficially resembles other prominent political novels, notably Henry Adams's *Democracy* (also published anonymously when it first appeared), Willie Lee Brammer's *The Gay Place* and Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*. All these tales bore witness in different ways to some mature reckoning with the world of power, asking whether its terms, from a moral perspective, are acceptable. The answers each novel finally provides are less important than the way they engage the question: They all strongly underline that something consequential is at stake in the political process.

All that's ever at stake in *Primary Colors*, by contrast, is the presidency. The narrator, Henry Burton, is a young but seasoned political operative. He's also of mixed race, which provides some flimsy justification for the book's title—and the occasion for some clunky sermonizing regarding liberal squeamishness about race.

Almost despite himself, Henry wants to believe that Stanton and the democratic process are for real. But apart from a few wistful evocations of "the folks" in New Hampshire, he never really manages the trick. Nor does he decide much of anything to the contrary. When he finally seems to have

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